The Beaver

AUTUMN 1977

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COVER: A Blue Coat Boy in his school costume.
In the background is the entrance gate to Christ's Hospital.
Courtesy of Guildhall Library.

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HOSPITAL BOYS OF THE BAY

By Richard I. Ruggles

TEEN-AGE APPRENTICES, indentured from the age of fourteen or fifteen, usually for a period of seven years, were part of the normal roster of employees in the Hudson's Bay Company's settlements in Rupert's Land. Many a veteran fur trader arrived as a lad on the alien shores of the Bay; many an old sea-dog on Company ships began his training as a green cabin-boy — all of them children in a strange and harsh man's world. Such an apprenticeship system was a common feature of trade and commerce during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries particularly. Among these Hudson's Bay Company apprentices were some who were contracted for from charity schools, especially in London; of these, a certain number had been selected from schools which provided some training in mathematics, navigation and surveying; and among these few boys a number later aided in the exploration, surveying, and mapping of Company territory.

It is an interesting venture to illuminate the milieu of the two London Charity Hospitals, with their mathematical schools, which provided early homes for these young Company servants, and to ascertain the type and quality of schooling which the Company considered would bring some particular benefits to it during the employment of apprentices in the New World.

Charity schools were founded by the thousand in Britain, especially during the eighteenth century, although many predated this period. It had become apparent that there was a vast number of poor children who were orphans, or whose parents were unable to afford to send them to Dames' schools, or other fee-paying institutions. Charity schools were considered by society to be a solution to the two problems of irreligion and pauperism. They were championed mainly by the middle class, and only a few were endowed by the nobility. It has been said that charity schools became a favourite form of benevolence in these centuries. The schools had the aim of promoting social discipline and utilitarian values and their ultimate goal was to provide the opportunity of apprenticeship for young boys and girls. Or, as it was clearly put, 'the children must be taught to live good industrious lives in that station of life to which god called them . . . and education . . . would be the means of subduing any vice, irreligion and subversive tendencies which might be prevalent.'

Most charity schools had small populations, the total often being stipulated in their charters. Most were established to serve a parish; some drew from a wider clientele. The normal structure was that of a joint stock company, with local subscribers who lived mainly in the locale. They were usually managed by a board of governors or trustees whose tasks included, among others, those of examining the children orally at regular intervals on their work, and obtaining positions for those ready to enter their apprenticeships. Some boards failed to oversee the management of their schools properly, but others took as much care as possible, and especially to investigate the characters of their potential employers. Also, the governors had the right to present young children for the vacancies in the school, in a rota system. The school charter stipulated the area from which the pupils might be drawn, and in some circumstances clearly indicated the types of livelihoods which the parents might or might not engage in to have their children eligible. For example, the Roan School in Blackheath, Essex, stipulated that they were to be poor and indigent persons whose employment was to be on the land; while children of watermen, fishermen, and mariners were never to be admitted. Peter Joye's

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Charitie School, Blackfriars, took in forty boys and thirty girls from the poorest families of St Ann's parish, but they catered to poor foreign children, particularly from the Low Countries, or children of foreign extraction. But, in any case, most schools clearly indicated that the pupils must be free of 'noisesome disease upon entry and to be kept clean and free of vermin', upon pain of being discharged if they were not.

The larger portion of the schools instructed their students mainly in the basics of 'reading, writing and cyphering' (or casting up accounts), and taught them useful work with a view of their later employment.

GUILDHALL LIBRARY, LONDON

Hospital Boys in the courtyard of the Blue Coat School. The Company employed eight apprentices from this school between 1680 and 1717 for its fur-trade operations on the Bay.

Blue Coat boys drawing tickets at a state lottery at Guildhall in 1765. Their right hands are open with fingers extended, to show that tickets are not secreted in their hands.

Boys were instructed in some manual arts; the girls learned to sew, knit and make their own clothes. In any case the children were 'to do such . . . work as Children of their rank are or ought to be taught.'

A thorough knowledge of the Christian faith was to be engendered by daily prayers, lessons in catechism, singing lessons and (at least on Sunday) church attendance. This reached a climax in most schools in the annual Charity School Sunday, when the children would parade to church to perform, and the collection would be designated for the upkeep of the school.

Alternate activity of a less praiseworthy nature may be deduced from the *Daily Post* newspaper of 9 May 1728, where it was reported that fifteen of the Bridewell Hospital apprentices from over in London had been housed in the Gatehouse in Westminster, and arraigned before several Justices of the Peace. To make a long story short, it appeared that they had been hired by boys of Westminster School to help them out in their annual brouhaha, with clubs and staves, against other Westminster school boys. They had performed so well, and had been paid so handsomely, they had 'afterwards got into an Ale-house in King Street where they became drunk and quarreled with the Constables and Watch and wounded several of them, causing such a Riot and Disorder that the Guards came from Whitehall'.

Depending upon the resources of the school, each child was to be provided yearly with a set of clothing, which was to consist at least of the basic necessities. The boys of the Sir John Cass Foundation in Stepney, for example, received a complete set of blue garments: coat, waistcoat, breeches, knit stockings, a blue cap with red tassel, a school badge, and at Christmas a pair of leather breeches for Sunday wear.

Although thousands of pupils passed through the charity schools only a portion of them attained their apprenticeships. For example, only about thirty per cent of the students who were at St Leonard's, Shoreditch, during the eighteenth century, did so. Some were expelled for being 'bad boys' or 'dunces', some died, some were taken out by family or friends and put to work, and some ran away. Most apprentices went into trades, commerce, or into domestic service. And some were taken into the Royal Navy and merchant navy, or into large trading organizations as the East India, Anglo-Russian, and Hudson's Bay Companies.

Early in the history of the Hudson's Bay Company the decision had been made to train some of its servants by the apprentice system. By 1684 there were ten apprentices on the rolls. Over the years they were taken in from many regions and schools, but two institutions in particular have played larger roles in the Company system. These were the Grey Coat Hospital of the Royal Foundation of Queen Anne, St Margaret's Parish, Westminster, and Christ's Hospital, The Blue Coat School, London. Both Grey Coat and Blue Coat Schools still exist as teaching institutions, the first for girls, and the second for boys only. Although both Hospitals had much that was similar in their characteristics, Christ's Hospital was

older, larger, wealthier and had more sumptuous quarters, having been granted the sequestered buildings of the Grey Friars; and some of its Governors were of national renown. The Grey Coat Hospital, on the other hand, developed in a more modest manner, similar to most of the other charity schools. The common feature, which proved to be attractive to the Committee of the Company was the operation of a mathematical school; from the special classes of these schools all of the young apprentices accepted by the H B C were graduated. The mathematical schools provided curricula which were useful for service in the Navy, on merchant ships, and in the case of the trading companies, in administration and the trade; and hopefully also, for the Hudson's Bay Company, to undertake exploration and surveys, and to engage in some cartographic pursuits.

The Company's contacts with the two hospitals extended overall from 1680 to 1799, the years in which the first and last mathematical boys entered Company service. Nineteen apprentices in all came into Hudson's Bay Company service from these two schools, eleven from Grey Coat and eight from Blue Coat. In contrast to this, from 1702 to 1804, the Grey Coat Hospital's mathematical school provided some 43 boys for the Royal Navy and 26 boys for various merchant ships. All of the Blue Coat apprentices entered the Company's service from 1680 until 1717, and after that the relationship between this school and the Company ceased. There was a hiatus of some 50 years after this before the Company again reverted to the practice of taking mathematical boys as apprentices. They turned in 1766 to the Grey Coat Hospital, largely under the impetus of new policies which were to involve inland wintering, establishing inland trading posts, exploration, and mapping.

By 1800, in fact, the Company had ended their practice of apprenticing young boys under the age of eighteen. It had become increasingly apparent that there was a growing reservoir of young men already in the New World. These were home-bred sons of Company servants who had married in the country. The Company turned to these young men, knowledgeable of the country, its life and trading operations, for a supply of new servants.

Christ's Hospital was located near St Paul's Cathedral in the City in a lovely complex of buildings. With Letters Patent granted in 1553 by Edward VI, it had gained some considerable reputation so that by the eighteenth century it could number among its governors such eminent persons as Samuel Pepys; Sir Isaac Newton; Sir Christopher Wren; John Flamsteed, Astronomer Royal; and Sir Jonas Moore, Inspector General of Ordnance. In 1769 it had 516 children on the roll, and had amassed a considerable staff: the upper and lower grammar school masters, the mathematical, writing, drawing and music masters, and other teachers; a butler, steward, cook, two chirurgeons or surgeons, barber, tailor, brewer, coal keeper, matron, sisters, porters and a number of lesser minions. Students were entered by being presented by the governors, the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London, by city guilds, by the parishes, and by individuals having given special gifts.

The gateway to Christ's Hospital (the word 'hospital' was synonymous with 'school'), Newgate Street, City of London. A statue of a Blue Coat Boy stands in the door niche.

The hospital was organized into five schools — grammar, writing, drawing, reading and mathematical. The latter school, endowed by Charles II in 1673, had become especially noted. Although it was the grammar school which sent some of its young men on to university and not the mathematical school, yet it was this section of the hospital which had gained the interest of the governors and attracted many of the best boys in the hospital. They were given the sobriquet, the King's Boys, and they occupied a section of the hospital with a separate entrance, and with their designation well displayed. Although the mathematical masters had included some who were irresponsible, most were chosen with care and proved to be successful teachers. Perhaps the most famous was William Wales, who had been chosen by the Royal Society to take observations of the Transit of Venus in 1769, at Hudson's Bay Company posts. Although the mathematical boys' education involved, among other subjects, Latin, Greek and calligraphy, their core

training was in mathematics, navigation, use of instruments, drawing of charts, and the use of globes and maps. The central aim was to prepare them to become qualified naval and maritime personnel eventually, after their apprenticeship years were completed. They were required to be examined by Trinity House before passing out from the hospital.

The Grey Coat Hospital was established in 1698 in Westminster in a rented house, but in 1706 a Royal charter was granted. A larger school was constructed on property near Victoria Street, belonging to Westminster Abbey, and was added to over the years. Into this foundation were admitted, as it was noted, forty of the greatest objects of charity, to be educated in sober and virtuous principles, and instructed in the Christian religion. The governors of the hospital were

GUILDHALL LIBRARY, LONDON

In 1766 when new policies involved the establishment of inland posts, exploration and mapping, the Company employed boys from the Grey Coat School, Tothill Fields, Westminster, London. Except for the high fence, the school appears the same today as in this nineteenth-century drawing.

local tradesmen basically, such as a cheesemonger, draper, soap merchant, bookseller, and dealers in candles, brooms, and leather goods. Money was scarce, and throughout its first century or so of existence there had to be minimal staffing, and sparse equipment and furnishings. An inventory of about 1738 described them as being of 'pitiful bareness'. It also indicated that there was no bath or washing apparatus in the building. Apparently, there was a cold water tap outside for ablutions.

For some period of time students also undertook work in the school, such as wool combing and spinning. Girls could sell their hair to wig makers. The proceeds were to aid in the upkeep of the school, and in clothing the children. Although there was evidence of dishonesty on the part of some teachers, of cruelty including bullying and flogging, it is unlikely that Grey Coat Hospital was much different from other charity schools. Its lowest period of internal malaise appears to have been during the decades of the 1770s and 1780s, the years during which most of the Grey Coat apprentices were accepted into the Company. On the whole, the evidence indicates that the governors and staff of the hospital were trying, within the social framework of the time, and with the resources at hand, to carry out their appointed tasks to the best of their abilities.

In the first quarter of the eighteenth century it became increasingly obvious to the governors that, outside of the trades and of commerce, the other major markets for young male apprentices would be sea service. This required a broader education, particularly in mathematics and navigation. In fact, as early as 1710, a suggestion had been made that some of the brighter boys should be taught these subjects, but the decision was postponed. Much later, in 1733, in response to their advertisement for 'One Skilled in Navigation and Able to teach youth', a mathematics master was hired, but he stayed for less than three months.

Some other London charity schools had also perceived these requirements, but most could not afford to develop a special program on their own premises. As a result, there developed in London in the 1730s several special mathematical schools, which catered to students from other schools for such intellectual pursuits. This was fortuitous for Grey Coat School, because it had been the recipient of several bequests, the proceeds of which were slated to be directed towards this type of study. The annual income from an estate in Suffolk, and a legacy of £500 from a former long-time governor, Captain Taylor, were available to enrol a few chosen boys in Neale's School, in Hatton Garden. For two years, 1737 to 1739, at least four boys were selected to attend three days a week from nine to five o'clock. Neale's furnished the necessary books, a noon meal was made available at 4 pence per head and, at the time of apprenticeship each boy was to be given a complete set of mathematical instruments by this school. For this service the hospital paid 20 shillings per annum for each boy registered there. Also, from their particular funds, Grey Coat School was able to provide for each apprentice sent to sea service, a proper seaman's chest and a settlement of £5 to each master accepting the apprentice. At first, the four boys chosen had been refused by Neale's School as being insufficiently qualified in basic arithmetic, but after a 'crash' course they were accepted. This school also required a bond of £10, paid from the Taylor fund, to be posted for each boy enrolled, to try to guarantee that when the course was completed the boys would indeed accept sea service. One of the Grey Coat boys did, in fact, skip from Neale's School, and was, accordingly, also expelled from Grey Coat Hospital.

ENGRAVING BY GUSTAVE DORE, 1872

This slum area in Westminster, known as the Devil's Acre, would have provided some of the 'greatest objects of charity' to be instructed at the Grey Coat School.

In 1739 the hospital governors concluded that it would be more advantageous to establish a special program on their own premises. At first they hired one of the masters at Neale's School, Samuel Warner, for two afternoons a week to teach a number of chosen students. To establish the reality of this new school they painted a sign 'The Mathematical School' in gold letters on blue over the central door of the hospital, they eventually designed a special badge, and they appointed a Mr Heath as mathematical instrument maker to serve the school. The new mathematics master purchased a Herman Moll's World Map in two

hemispheres, and a Mercator World Map on cloth and with a roller. A separate mathematical room was meagrely fitted out with equipment in the boys' wing. The school remained in operation at least until 1869. However, the hey-day of their activity was from 1740 to about 1800.

Whereas the destinations of the Grey Coat mathematical apprentices lay particularly in the Navy from 1702 to 1763, with their acceptance by merchant ship officers from 1745 to 1790 being important, and by the Hudson's Bay Company from 1766 to 1799, in the nineteenth century requirements for these services ceased, or at least, declined. The mathematical boys, instead, were indentured to trades where their training had some special advantage; that is, to mathematical instrument makers, to drawing instrument makers, to teachers of mathematics (as trainees), to architects, surveyors, builders, and shipwrights.

All of the hospital boys of the Bay from both Christ's Hospital and Grey Coat Hospital proceeded from the same milieu, from the crowded, mean streets of London, whether from Clerkenwell, Cripplegate, Holborn, Southwark or Westminster; and from impecunious families where the father, if employed, was perhaps a cloth worker, fishmonger, tailor, girdler, cordwainer or shipwright. None had any more advantages than any other before they were accepted into the charity hospitals. But, thereafter, Blue Coat Boys lived in better circumstances, and had a more enriched education than Grey Coat Boys.

What type of special training did the mathematical boys receive, and with what equipment and materials were they working? The program at Christ's Hospital was more elaborate and better taught, and their facilities much more extensive and diversified. Even so, the fundamental elements were the same. They all had reading, the rudiments of grammar, penmanship, some drawing, religious studies and singing. At Christ's some Latin and Greek were involved also. The main syllabus may be divided into three groups of studies: mathematics, navigation, and cartography.

Although cyphering (plain arithmetic) was required of all, they took aspects of geometry and trigonometry, although these were taught in an applied form a great deal. They learned decimals, square roots and logarithms. They also were taught the elements of projections and of drawing projection grids. Their texts, as indicated in the inventory of c.1738 included Euclid's Elements, Hutton's Mensuration, and mathematical tables.

Practical navigation was much more extensive in its coverage. The syllabus included: plain-sailing with the use of the sea chart, the use of the log and line, the taking of latitude by several methods, and the use of such instruments as the quadrant and the cross-staff, the method of navigating by dead reckoning, the way to keep a journal at sea, the use of the calendar for observing aspects of the sun, moon and tides, and the rigging of ships. There were two full-rigged ship models in the classroom at Christ's Hospital, and Grey Coat School was given the models of a sloop and a yacht for study purposes. Also provided were a few copies of books such as Burrow's Navigation, Haseldon's Seaman's Daily Assistant, the Nautical Ephemeris, a number of calendars, and particularly Robertson's Elements of Navigation. John Robertson was the Grey Coat School's most prestigious mathematical master; he wrote the book while at the hospital, and before he resigned to be appointed as Headmaster of the Royal Naval Academy, Portsmouth.

Cartographic topics included the use of globes for various geographic and cartographic purposes, the construction and use of the navigational chart, the drawing of charts, maps and plans, and the drawing of profiles of headlands and coastlines. Some land measurement was also undertaken.

Grey Coat Hospital did not have an extensive array of equipment for student use. In addition to several navigational instruments, there were a theodolite, a Gunter's chain, a measuring tape and rods, a compass, several mariner's compasses, drawing compasses and navigational scales, parallel rules, a slide rule, and two globes. Examination of the account books of Grey Coat Hospital shows that its governors had not been over-generous to the mathematical masters for instruments over the years because a total of £110 only was apparently expended from 1739 to 1799 for this purpose. Other expenditures for the student's studies were on pens, pounce, sand dishes, slates and slate pencils and various writing and drawing papers, and cyphering books.

Such a curriculum, heavily weighted toward navigation, was much more suited to the needs of boys who were to go to sea on Hudson's Bay Company ships, as did four of the eight Blue Coat Boys: Charles Coats, Henry Conway, Josiah Gosling and William Wheelehouse and four of the eleven Grey Coat boys; Henry Hanwell, Charles Marchant, William Charles Payne and Thomas Ramsey. The other eleven youngsters; William Dolbey, George Halstead, Samuel Hopkins and Mathew Vicary of Christ's Hospital: and George Charles, John Charles, George Donald, Joseph Hansom, John Hodgson, George Hudson and David Thompson of Grey Coat Hospital, were sent to the Bay posts for land duty.

Little is known of the Blue Coat Boys' careers in North America. Since they had come into service between 1680 and 1717, whatever use they had made of their specialized education would have been confined to the posts on the Bay shore. Their names are not distinguished in the annals of the Company, not attached to any maps, nor associated with unusual inland forays such as those undertaken in this period

by Henry Kelsey to the Prairies, or Richard Norton and William Stewart into the Barren Grounds. It would seem, instead, that they were integrated into the usual operations of the trade. James Knight, Factor at York, in a letter of 1716 to head office in London, likely expressed the perceived utility of their previous training when he wrote 'it will do very well to have one at each factory that writes well and is brought up to accounts.'

The Grey Coat Boys' careers, on the other hand, are much better known. Although all of them were required to become familiar with, and to engage in, all aspects of the trade, all of them except Hansom became involved in exploration, sketching of routes, making locational observations, and to a greater or lesser extent, in preparing maps for Company use. David Thompson is the most illustrious of the group.

Two questions now arise. Was their education at Grey Coat Hospital as mathematical boys sufficient and suitable for their employment? And, were they employed in exploratory, surveying, and cartographic endeavours to the extent that the Hudson's Bay Company Committee had expected; and if not, why not?

The answer to the first question must be a qualified one. It is certainly axiomatic that a course syllabus will overstate the actual content of a course of studies, that teachers do not always cover all sections of a syllabus, and that students absorb only part of what is taught to them. Also, practical experience in the use of instruments must have been only slight. They may have merely handled some of the more esoteric equipment and have been given little opportunity to make observations and to work out problems of latitude and longitude location in class or out in the school yard. David Thompson related that he had met his former school mate, George Charles, when the latter arrived at Churchill, at the age of fifteen. Upon enquiring of him as to his experience in surveying, Charles stated that he only had about one year in the mathematical school and 'had three times with a quadrant brought down the sun to a chalk line on the wall — was declared fully competent and sent out to go on discovery.' It is likely that this illustration represents the minimal situation.

All of the apprentices could do basic arithmetic and were quite useful in keeping the accounts. They were taught to write properly and were therefore helpful in writing and copying post journals, letters and so on. But more than this, they could become quickly proficient in keeping more accurate and full journals while travelling, a qualification which was rare among their usual comrades. Moreover, they undoubtedly could sketch, make basic measurements, use a compass, and all had some experience in reading, compiling and drawing maps and charts.

The badge originally designed for the boys in the Mathematical School, Grey Coat Hospital.

But, more significant for this question was the fortuitous circumstance that Philip Turnor, the qualified surveyor and cartographer, was at hand during the apprenticeship years of many of the boys. Donald, Hodgson, Hudson and Thompson were all assigned to his care for various periods of time, in various regions of Rupert's Land, while Turnor was engaged in his mapping program. He gave each of them a rigorous re-introduction to surveying methods under various field conditions, from which they all benefited greatly. As David Thompson wrote, rather proudly, to the Committee in London in 1790, '. . . the last winter I passed . . . with Mr. Turnor, of whom I have learned the Theory and Practice of Practical Astronomy, my improvement in that Science, I hope my works will show.' Therefore, he proclaimed 'I am willing to go to make Observations for the Latitude, Longitude, Position etc. of any part of the Sea Coast you may send me'. The Grey Coat Hospital did in fact provide a reasonably suitable background for a full career with the Hudson's Bay Company during a period of rapid expansion into the interior of the continent.

The answer to the second question, as to the roles played by the Grey Coat Boys in the exploration, surveying and mapping of Rupert's Land, has as yet been more fully observed only in the career of David Thompson. On the whole, the other hospital boys are unknown quantitites. Their careers warrant further exposure. ◆

Our Sod House

By Evelyn Slater McLeod

AS A SMALL CHILD I watched from the shelter of our covered wagon while our sod house was being built. It was in the summer of 1909 that my uncle, Wesley Williams, and other pioneers from Benson County in North Dakota drove their prairie schooners onto homesteads 110 miles south-east of Stettler, Alberta, and set about building themselves homes from the good earth.

My uncle looked the property over and decided to locate the farm buildings where very little levelling would be required. The house, being given priority, was to face south. An area of 16' x 44' (inside measurements) would provide a kitchen and dining space 13' x 16', and sitting-room or parlour of the same size. Two bedrooms were to go at the west end of the structure off the sitting-room and another bedroom and a pantry were planned for the east end.

There would be windows (2'6" x 4'8") at each end of the house and three windows each of this same size were to be placed together on the south side to accommodate the sitting-room. The same number were to be set in the north wall to light the kitchen and dining area. The one door to the house opened into the kitchen on the south side.

The first task was to dig a cellar in the kitchen area to provide storage under the house where it would be cool in summer but warm enough in the winter months to prevent the freezing of provisions. The cellar was approximately 7' deep and 10' square; when the house was completed a trapdoor would be cut in the kitchen floor and a ladder dropped down to the storage area.

A nearby slough provided the building material. Furrows were ploughed near the edge of the slough where the turf was tough and could be handled in large slabs. Two horses on a hand-plough turned over the earth in ribbons 16" wide and 4" thick: the sod was then marked off in lengths of 32" and chopped apart with an axe. These chunks were loaded on the wagon and hauled to the building site.

The first row of sod slabs showed the outline of the house. They were placed side by side, grass side down, to make a rectangle whose outside dimensions were 49'4" x 21'4". After the first tier was laid and carefully levelled by forcing chunks of soil into the cracks, the

Prairie schooners heading north from the United States to homesteads in Alberta c.1910.

MANITOBA ARCHIVES

The sod house built by Wesley Williams as it appeared in 1911.

second course was placed and then the third, each with a different pattern. The procedure was then repeated to add stability. The overlapping of joints discouraged mice and snakes — although we had no poisonous reptiles in that part of the country.

When the sod walls were two feet high, the spaces for windows were left open, but the wall-laying continued up to 6'8" — to the top of the window openings.

At this point the men stopped work and made a number of trips to a nearby coulee where an abundance of small poplar and willow trees grew. Once again the land yielded its resources. Wagonloads of poplars were brought back and limbs trimmed off and saved because fuel was scarce. The small poplar poles were laid across the top of all window openings and the doorway, and extended out into the sod walls for twelve inches. Six inches back from the outside of the wall a 2 x 6 length of lumber was substituted for a pole; this squared off the openings so window framing could be put in later. Lumber was also used for the door opening. The windows had to be carefully installed to eliminate any stress which would result in glass breakage. When our group of pioneers headed north we brought with us windows and doors, and enough lumber for floors and casings. An extra wagon carried our building supplies.

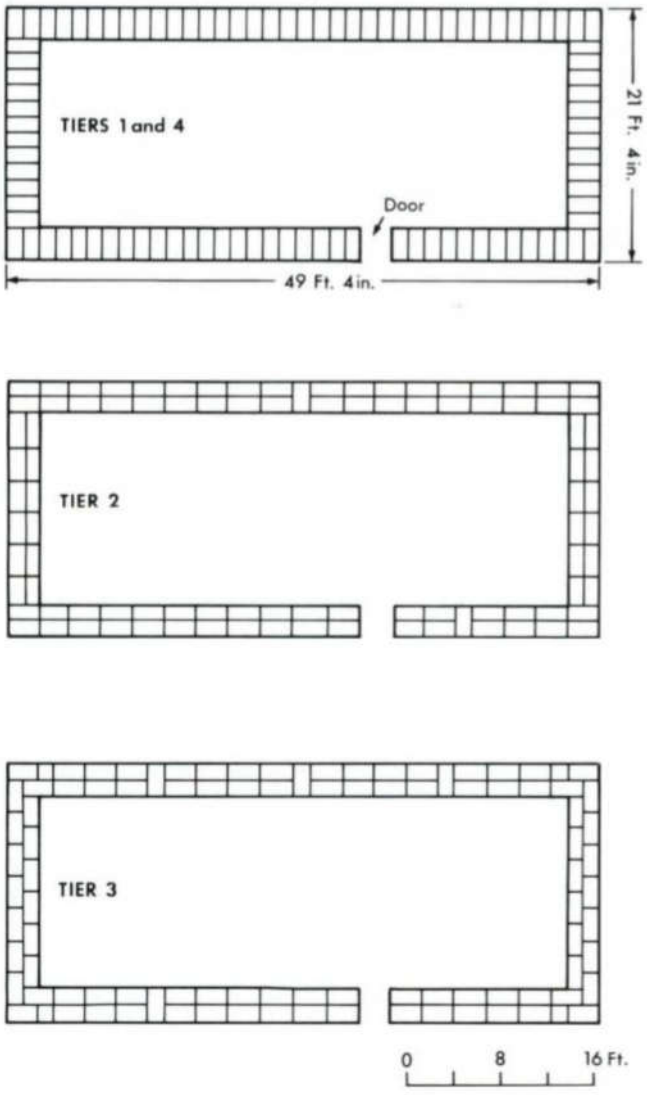
Once the poles and lumber were in place, tar-paper was laid over them and the sod-laying continued all around to a height of eight feet on the side walls (sixteen inches over windows and door). The end walls were built to a slanted rise of nine feet in the middle to form nine-foot gables.

Floor plan of the house showing the main area and the summer kitchen.

Next the 2 x 4 floor joists were laid on edge on the ground and stabilized with solid bridging. The joists had to be put in place at this time so that the posts supporting a ridge-pole could be nailed to them prior to laying the shiplap flooring. Had I been older at the time I might have felt we were 'upper class'; our nearest neighbours had only the prairie grass, and two inches of matted hay for a floor in their new home — the 'forerunner of the shag carpet', as a pioneer gentleman from the area recently called it.

To roof the structure, a ridge-pole 51' 4" was made by splicing together the heaviest and straightest poplars. This was hoisted to the nine-foot gables and rested on the sod, extending beyond the gables 12" at each end. The long ridge-pole was supported at the halfway point by a sturdy post — two nine-foot lengths of 2 x 6 lumber spiked together. For further strengthening, two other posts of two 2 x 4s were erected under the ridge-pole, nine feet from each inside end wall. Several years later when materials were available, skeleton partitions were joined to these supporting posts and covered with inexpensive cheesecloth and wallpaper. In those days lumber still had to be hauled too far to finish the walls in wood, although later on, the interiors were all finished in this manner. In as far as was possible, our furnishings were set next to the friable walls to shield them from damage. I recall being constantly cautioned to stay away from the unprotected portions. Cheesecloth on walls and ceilings was a welcome improvement. It cut down on the number of insects, especially the little centipedes (thousand-legged worms we called them) that were always dropping on and into things. In the first days curtains strung on wire divided the rooms.

The procedure of laying the sod slabs, for maximum stability and overlapping.



With the ridge-pole in place, the builders turned their attention to rafters. These were poplar poles from the slough cut to approximately twelve feet in length. They varied in diameter from two to four inches, were often crooked and, of course, the tops and bottoms were different in circumference. To compensate for this they were nailed alternately butt to tip, not more than four inches apart from ridge-pole to horizontal poles laid for plates along top centre of walls. This foundation for the roof was sturdy and strong; on one occasion a neighbour's cow ran up the slanting end of his hay stack, jumped to the sod roof on the barn and ran the full length of it before he could get her down. And there was no damage.

On top of these primitive poplar rafters my uncle laid two layers of tar-paper with seams overlapping; a third strip was spread the length of the ridge-pole. Holes for chimneys were cut through the tar-paper, one about centre of the sitting-room area and a bit to the left of the ridge-pole, and the other in the kitchen, near middle of the south wall. The stove-pipes were inserted through two clay tiles placed upright, and the edges were sealed with more tar-paper and scrap tin. Next, a layer of sod slabs was laid on top of the tar-paper; the sods were packed close together, grass side up, and the joints between were packed with loose dirt. The sods did not slide off the low-pitched roofs and their weight prevented the house-top from sailing across the prairie in a high wind. The ingenuity of the pioneer builders was tested in the roof construction, but even the best of roofs, in a two-day rain, would spring leaks here and there.

With the roof in place, work began on the windows. Sills of six-inch shiplap were made to cover the inside twenty-six inches of the thirty-two-inch sod at the bottom of the openings. Casings were installed six inches from outer edges of walls between the wide sills and the overhead 2 x 6s. Other 2 x 6s were butted against the sod sides to form the frame which would hold the window sash. The door was put in place in the

same way. When an inch or two one way or the other was needed, it could be had by cutting away sod, or by adding a chunk here and there.

In all areas of the house there was a great deal of caulking to do, and in this work the women and older children lent a hand. The larger holes were filled with chunks of sod; the finer work of chinking was done with a mud plaster. The earth was sieved through ordinary window screen into a galvanized washtub, then mixed with water to a consistency of a putty that could be handled with a trowel. The mud was forced into all the cracks and small openings and plastered up to and on the outside edges of the door and window frames. A great deal of chinking with clods had to be done along the top of the walls and gables after the roof was put on; these places were tightened up with the dirt and water mix.

The same mud plaster was used to finish the entire inside walls and many tubs of soil were screened and mixed before the job was finished. Then the interior walls were whitewashed. Finally, the shiplap floor was laid, the trap door was cut in the kitchen, and the ladder leading to the cellar was dropped into place.

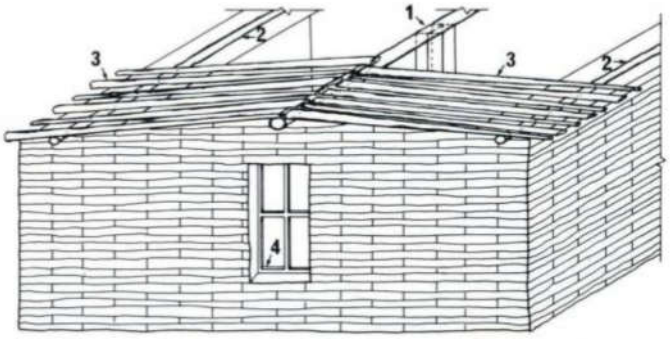
Two years after our farmhouse was finished, a sod lean-to-type summer kitchen with a coal bin at one end was added to the south side. Just before the hot weather was upon us, we moved the coal range to the summer kitchen and ate our meals in the inner room in comfort on the oak table with its oilcloth cover. Not many families provided themselves with this luxury.

When our house was finished, my aunt brought her rag carpeting out of the wagon and spread it in the parlour. This rug was made of three-foot strips of rag sewn together and, of course, it needed cleaning other than a weekly sweeping with the broom. When I grew old enough to help with the housework, I learned at first hand what a task it was to clean and wash the rug. The tacks that secured it to the floor were pulled out, the carpet rolled up and taken outside to the clothesline where it was beaten to remove most of the dust; then the strips were ripped apart and washed. It then had to be sewn together again by hand before it was re-laid on the board floor.

Our ornate heater sat in the middle of the parlour. After the hot windy summer had passed, we spent many evenings around the stove watching the dancing flames through the isinglass in its door; or reading by the light of the china coal-oil parlour lamp.

My aunt hung lace curtains at the windows and placed potted plants on the wide window-sills. During the cold months our geraniums, chrysanthemums, and Christmas cactus were carried to the cellar at night to prevent their freezing. Their blooms never failed to gladden the long winter days.

I lived for twelve years in that house and in my memories it was not just a sod house, but a comfortable and cherished home. ◆



A secure warm house — from blocks of sod, poplar poles, and a minimal investment in lumber and windows.

1. *Spliced poplar ridge-pole, six inches in diameter, set on peak of sod gables and supported with two 2 x 6s spiked together as a centre post and two 2 x 4s located nine feet from the end walls.*
2. *Plates (poplar poles) laid on the sod side-walls about twelve inches in from outside of wall.*
3. *Poplar pole rafters, twelve feet long and from two to four inches in diameter, are nailed to ridge-pole and plates, alternating large and small ends so as to be spaced no more than four inches apart.*
4. *Recessed window set in frame embedded six inches from outside of wall.*

Percy DeWolfe

'Iron Man of the Yukon'

By Carol Livermore

The author is an historian with Parks Canada, Ottawa. Photographs unless credited are from the collection of Mr DeWolfe's daughter, Mrs Jessie McCausland.

Percy DeWolfe, Royal Mail carrier on the Dawson-Eagle route from 1915 to 1950.

TO LONELY MINERS IN THE YUKON during the gold-rush years mail was the only real link with the world outside. The mail carriers brought news from friends and family, and often vital supplies as well. The men who carried the mail coped with the harsh climate, difficult terrain and primitive modes of transportation. Recognizing the critical reliance of the North upon its mail system, most carriers persevered, despite all odds, in delivering the mail.

One such dedicated mail carrier, Percy DeWolfe, earned the title 'Iron Man of the Yukon'. He embodied the stamina, drive, and zeal required of successful mail carriers in the North. In the spring of 1935 the *Dawson News* featured an article on Percy DeWolfe, Royal Mail contractor on the route between Dawson in the Yukon and Eagle, Alaska.

'Mr. DeWolfe' the newspaper proclaimed, 'has carried the mail in all kinds of weather and during the closing and opening seasons of the Yukon River has battled its ice floes, and often risked his life, but has always brought the mail through.' This statement summarized his contribution to his community, district, and country.

Born in Nova Scotia on 15 February 1877, Percy DeWolfe came to the Yukon in the summer of 1898 'after making the long, hazardous trip down the Pelly and Yukon by small boat.' He and his friend, Peter Anderson, arrived without funds, so set about earning enough money to finance a gold stake. Being Maritimers, it seemed appropriate that they enter a partnership as fishermen. They quickly established a profitable fishing business during the summer and a freighting business in the Fortymile area during the winter. A year after their arrival they built the road-house at Sixteenmile and two years later, they constructed Halfway House, where Percy lived for many years.

In 1903 Percy and his partner finally sought their fortunes as prospectors by participating in the stampede to Fairbanks. They returned the following year to the Dawson area to resume their 'fishing, freighting, hunting and woodcutting' business; apparently neither DeWolfe nor Anderson had found a significant direct reward from gold mining. Instead they preferred the more economically stable and frequently more profitable secondary service industries of the gold-mining community.

Sometime in the early years DeWolfe and Anderson married two sisters. Before Jessie Phillips DeWolfe's death in 1917 she had borne six children at Halfway House: Walter, William, Bertha, Ellen, Jessie, and Percy Jr. Their father never remarried.

In the early 1900s the state of mail service in the entire Yukon was still in its infancy. In the frenzy of a gold stampede, the Yukon needed instant government, law enforcement, and mail service. At first the North-West Mounted Police assumed the duties of mail

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The former post office at Dawson, c.1910. It would have been the starting point of DeWolfe's mail route during the early years of his contract.

carriers, bringing to the isolated mining camps occasional news of the outside world.

On 1 November 1898 the installation of a postmaster at Dawson heralded the beginning of private contracts for mail service, and by the spring of 1900 the Postmaster General was able to report that mail service 'has been performed with commendable regularity, both in winter and summer, by the Canadian Development Company under their contract.' The Yukon still faced infrequent service, interrupted for extended periods during freezing and break-up of the Yukon River. The service was also expensive. At a time when the Canadian Post Office in general was run at a surplus, the Yukon fell heavily into the red.

When Percy DeWolfe took over Eli Verreau's contract to deliver mail between Dawson City and Eagle, Alaska, in 1915, he undertook to serve a long and tortuous route. Eli Verreau had contracted to serve as both summer and winter carrier between 1908 and 1915 at the constant annual price of $9,000.00. The American government paid for part of the cost of this service, accounting for $1,038.46 of the annual total contract. Although Verreau had subcontracted some of his winter mail, he also carried at least some of it himself. In the summer he delivered mail by launch and, it would seem, by the regular steamer that plied the waters between Dawson and Fairbanks, Alaska. Verreau's contract at a flat rate was unusual; it was more customary for a mail contract to be let for a specified sum per trip. When Percy DeWolfe entered a direct contract with the federal government he was hired by the latter method and he was contracted only to take the winter mail. In the summer months, mail went by regular steamer at an unrecorded cost. Both the Canadian and American governments saved considerable sums of money when Percy took over the route. Initially he agreed to make the 204-mile round trip once a week for $125.00 per trip, and earned only $4,000.00 for each of his first two contract years. Afterwards, when he contracted for $160.00 per trip, he went only three times a month, and his total annual fee often fell below that of his initial years. Nevertheless, DeWolfe frequently carried freight and passengers on his rounds; thus the requirements of his contract did not force the total suspension of his private freighting business.

DeWolfe's mail contract probably followed the regular format for government carriers. The contractor was required to carry mail from the close of navigation in the fall until spring break-up, at specified intervals, to the posts along the prescribed route and to provide whatever vehicles that might be required: 'suitable motor or horse-drawn vehicles or sleighs or suitable launches'. In addition, the contractor undertook in writing to 'use every effort to expedite

the [mail] service and prevent interruption and delay' even during the worst periods for travel. He contracted to provide for the care and protection of the mail in his custody, although he was not liable for loss by theft (unless, of course, he was himself implicated). He also agreed to pay all costs of tolls, ferries, and other such expenses in the performance of the service contracted for. If the contractor defaulted in conveying the mails the Postmaster General could, at the expense of the contractor, hire someone else; the contract could also be annulled by giving the contractor proper notice.

A further but unwritten condition of the contract required that the contractor provide proper feed and rest places for his animals. This necessity caused a flurry of activity along the numerous Yukon mail routes in the last few weeks before the close of navigation in the fall. According to the Dawson newspaper 'Food for the men, horses and dogs distributed over this vast area for the winter comprises thousands of tons, and the aggregate of travel they will accomplish before the snow melts next spring will run into tens of thousands of miles.' The article included the specific details of Percy DeWolfe's preparations: 'On the Dawson-Eagle run, Percy DeWolfe, the contractor, has been busy . . . taking thirty tons of hay, oats, dog feed and groceries and the like down on his boat, the Weasel, and distributing them at Halfway House, Fortymile, Midway Point, and Eagle.' Over the years Percy built small way stations and cabins at intervals along his route in which to cache his supplies and sometimes to house his relief dogs.

By the time Percy DeWolfe was carrying mail under direct federal contract the winter road from Dawson to Fortymile had been built across points in the river, probably on the ice, 'thus cutting off the long bends of the river, and materially shortening the distances . . . . The approaches from the river bank were repaired, the road was widened and levelled throughout and the winter crossings were marked.' One could not, however, consider the road a modern highway and Percy DeWolfe's route remained difficult and dangerous throughout his career.

The periods of freeze-up and thaw were the most hazardous. On 26 April 1919, the mail carrier had his first close brush with death although 'several times before this', the newspaper reporting the incident claimed, 'he has fallen through the ice, and has lost horses and sleighs, but, despite the great perils he has encountered, he seems to bear a charmed life.' On this occasion Percy was about a mile below his home at Halfway House. He was jogging along easily, but turned from the track he was following to go along the winter road. After travelling a short distance 'there was a crash of the ice, and the horses went through.' Fortunately, he was close to the bank, away from the swiftest current. The sleigh itself had not broken through the ice although its singletree hung over the edge. Percy tried to rescue his floundering horses, but soon found himself in the icy water. 'The horses, immediately on going through the ice began pawing desperately, and were encumbered by their harness. Percy, in his effort to get out, was grazed down the back by one of the horses, and the man's overalls torn open near the waist. Had a hoof struck the man, he would have been forced down, and no doubt would have passed under the animals and then under the ice. Fortunately he came up close to the overhanging singletree.' Bobbing up and down in the water, he made several desperate attempts to grab this part of the sleigh. He finally succeeded and gradually hauled himself from the freezing river. His horses, however, were lost. Although Percy was soaked through, he safely cached the mail and hurried home to change. The sleigh was recovered later.

On another occasion when DeWolfe was travelling behind his dog-team along the shore ice of the Yukon River between Fanning and Fortymile, he and his sleigh broke through into the icy water. He managed to cling to his sleigh, but was unable to pull himself back onto the ice. The mail carrier shouted a command to his lead dog 'and the eight dogs got on the ice and pulled for all that was in them, until the front of the runners were against the ice.' The newspaper report continued: 'He could hardly move his arms and legs, and it was impossible for him to reach his matches or knife inside his parka. He would meet no living soul until he reached Forty Mile and that was 16 miles away . . . but there was nothing to do but "mush on". After several hours Percy reached Forty Mile and his clothes had to be chopped and cut off . . . His feet were badly blistered from rubbing, [and] the skin of his heels was torn off when his clothing was removed.' He apparently suffered no permanent damage from this incident.

Fortymile, Yukon, a settlement on DeWolfe's regular route, pictured during an ice jam and flood, 10 May 1904. The periods of freezing and break-up on the Yukon River were the most hazardous for the mail carrier.

As one would expect in the Yukon, Percy was harassed by blizzards. One such experience was reported by his passenger on 18 February 1924 in the *Dawson News:* 'Struggling over a rough and heavily drifted trail' DeWolfe reached Dawson after a 'bitter' trip from Eagle. It had been one of the coldest trips of the year and during it DeWolfe had 'found it necessary time and again to stop and shovel out the heavy drifts and make it possible for the horses to proceed. They were dragging a double-ender and trailer, and often the horses would stumble and fall in the deep snows.'

But the intrepid mail carrier's most bizarre accident may well have been his fall from a bluff in 1927. He had been walking along the bluff in his socks to prevent slipping but nonetheless he suddenly felt himself tumbling. When he regained consciousness he was on the beach one hundred feet below. 'I went down the side of the bluff like a shot out of a gun . . . I must have been dazed for a short time, but when I came to the mail sack, which had slid off my back, was resting on the beach a short distance away . . . I was only cut about the nose and mouth, not a single bone in my body was broken, although the tumble gave me quite a jolt.'

Percy's winter mail contract left him free to pursue other interests in the short northern summers. He continued to fish commercially in the river in front of his house. With the aid of a 'fish wheel' he caught large numbers of king salmon which he dried and sold in Dawson. He may also have freighted along the river. In the early 1920s he branched out into fox farming, a business that was currently popular in the Yukon. Although he maintained his farm for many years it never developed into a commercial operation.

By the 1920s silver mining was becoming profitable in the Yukon, and in the spring of 1927 a silver camp bearing the name of DeWolfe was under full-scale operation. Although discoveries had been made in the region of Percy's Halfway House up to twenty years earlier, it was owing to his persistence and further discoveries that the silver area was eventually opened. The 'Silver Mountain' was a short distance above the DeWolfe residence on the Yukon River, and Percy had apparently 'always held bright hopes for the opening up of this silver camp' and had long 'been attempting to interest his friends in this proposition'. He eventually succeeded in the summer of 1926 but after an initial burst of activity by Peter Rost and some associates (including Percy's two elder sons) the deposit was found to be disappointing. Altogether, DeWolfe's involvement in such a variety of small business ventures indicates that he was perhaps a typical frontier individualist, always on the alert for the opportunity to make a dollar.

Percy DeWolfe became a legend in his own time in the Yukon. As early as 1926 he was known in the Dawson area as the 'Iron Man of the Yukon', an epithet apparently related to his physical constitution and to his faithfulness as a mail carrier. His regular

arrival was eagerly awaited by the isolated prospectors and at Eagle, the terminus of his route, the sight of Percy mushing into view would often bring out an excited crowd. On one occasion the people of Eagle, upon hearing that Percy had brought one of his daughters and her family with him on his run, hurriedly staged a dance in their honour. According to the Dawson newspaper reporting the occasion, the city hall, 'which has been closed for many years, was opened, the floor polished, the chairs dusted and the band struck up with a bang . . . Everyone had a wonderful time.'

DeWolfe was 'as reliable as the sun' in a climate where such reliability was a monumental achievement. He not only brought the mail; in isolated way stations he provided a hardy link with the outside world, freighting cargo that ranged from '80 cases of cream' to 'plants of that most delectable Dawson celery . . . and a genuine hogswallow bath tub.' To the people along his route he brought news of the condition of the river and trails, often life-saving information. He carried passengers as well as freight in and out of the remote regions of the Yukon River and on at least one occasion he brought a sourdough miner to Dawson for medical attention; on another, he took a young girl 'on the round trip for a winter view of the border'. The young lady may have encountered more of adventure than she anticipated for she had to spend a cold night under a tree while Percy set off for parts to repair an untimely breakdown of his gas launch.

The mail carrier also saved the life of an old sourdough, John Fanning, whose roadhouse had been swept away by the moving ice jam that was causing the flood of the lower Yukon River in 1937. Percy and a police officer set about to search for the old man. According to the newspaper account of the incident the 'searchers could find but one place in the ice barrier where it was possible to climb over and get to higher ground. Once over they found Fanning, who was in very bad condition, having been without food for several days and subject to exposure. The rescuers lowered him from the high ice by means of a rope and took him to Eagle. Without the timely intervention of Percy DeWolfe and his thoughfulness in searching for the man it would have resulted in a tragedy.'

In the later 1920s the attention of the Dawson newspaper turned from DeWolfe's struggles to take through the mail by boat, stage, dog-team, and on foot. Airplanes were chartered to carry mail and with them came new and therefore more news-worthy battles with the elements. Reports of planes crashing through the ice, of makeshift runways on the river, and of trips fogged in or delayed by storms, replaced former accounts of ground-level scrapes.

Except for periodic cryptic accounts of Percy's arrivals and departures, the newspapers ceased to follow his hazardous and faithful career. In May 1935,

Percy DeWolfe delivering mail by horse-drawn sled. Depending on conditions, he also travelled by dog-team, launch, and on foot.

however, Percy DeWolfe again made headlines when he was awarded a silver medal by King George V in commemoration of Their Majesties' Silver Jubilee. On that occasion the local newspaper announced that Percy 'has won for himself an enviable reputation in carrying out his duties . . . The News joins Mr. DeWolfe's many friends in extending their heartiest congratulations and may he long continue to carry His Majesty's mails.' Percy continued on the route between Dawson and Eagle until the post office at Fortymile closed in 1950 and mail began to be brought to Eagle by plane.

When he died in 1951, less than a year after guiding his dogs along his last mail run, the townspeople of Dawson accorded him a fond and moving farewell. Scores of residents filled St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral to capacity while the minister 'spoke in eloquent terms of the integrity, faithful service and loyalty with which Percy DeWolfe had served his beloved northland over a long period of years.'

Percy DeWolfe carried the mails for over thirty-five years. His route passed through the remote byways of the Yukon where sophisticated equipment could not be used. His obituary summarized his career: 'Percy was, without a doubt, the last of the hardy, rugged overland mail carriers in the northland and some of the hazardous trips which he made between Dawson and Eagle by horse-drawn sleigh, by dog team and by launch have become legends of the country.' ◆

An Eskimo shoots an arrow at a European ship. From an illustration on a map of Scandinavia issued in 1539.

The Eskimo People: The Earliest Accounts

By Wendell H. Oswalt

The author teaches anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles, and has written a number of books about Eskimos and Indians.

THE ESKIMOS — the Inuit or Yuit, as they have traditionally called themselves — occupy a special place among aboriginal Americans because of their unique life-style and also because of the vast geographical region that they occupied. At least 700 years elapsed between the earliest encounters of Europeans with the Inuit and the discovery of the last group, an unprecedented time span for initial contacts with all the people of an ethnic group. The first vague reports about them represent them as far more mystical than real. Early explorers sometimes described them as savages: cannibals who worshipped the sun and ate only raw food. Many years passed before their way of life was appreciated as a highly resourceful adaptation to arctic conditions.

The first Europeans to settle near Eskimos were the Icelanders who colonized Greenland about AD 986. They were not the fierce Vikings in their long ships but rather venturesome Norse traders and settlers. Fortunately they had a compelling interest in history, and family accomplishments were recorded as oral narratives known as sagas. The first quasi-historical reference to aboriginal Americans is in a saga about Greenland. When Eric the Red and his followers settled south-west Greenland, they found ruins and artifacts belonging to an extinct population that we now know was Eskimo. Why these people disappeared is unknown, but some suspect that it was because climatic changes produced a local scarcity of sea mammals. Thus the first reference to Eskimos is a comment about sites they had occupied. The Norse who voyaged to Labrador and Newfoundland around the year 1000 encountered aboriginal peoples, but they were in all likelihood Algonkian Indians. The Norse term for these Indians, and later for Eskimos, was 'Skraelings' which was translated as 'barbarians' or possibly 'pygmies' and may have implied the supernatural qualities of gnomes and trolls.

When the Norse colony in south-west Greenland reached its peak in the 1100s, it included nearly 300 homesteads and a population of about 5,000. The economy was based on fishing, hunting, and raising stock. Their most important exports were narwhal and walrus tusks and wild animal skins obtained along the west-central coast by hunting parties. About 1200, if not earlier, Norse hunters began meeting Skraelings and described them as a people without iron who used missiles made from walrus tusks and sharp stones as knives. Reportedly they did not bleed when lightly wounded with weapons, but when a mortal wound was struck, their blood continued to flow for a long time. This is the earliest clear, though obviously embellished, account of encounters with Eskimos. These Eskimos were representatives of the Thule culture that originated in Alaska and gradually pushed east into western Greenland. By about 1500 the Norse colony was virtually extinct. It is more likely, however, that Eskimos dealt only one among several blows that ended the Norse era. No one really knows which factors contributed the most to the death of the colony. Climatic conditions apparently grew more severe in the 1300s and 1400s. A trend toward colder weather favoured the Eskimos' advance southward and made it hazardous for the Norse to venture north to obtain the ivory and skins so vital to their trade with Europe. As this trade declined, social ties with Iceland grew more tenuous, and religious bonds with Norway finally shattered.

The earliest portrayal of Eskimos is on a map of Scandinavia, *Carta marina*, made by Olaus Magnus

and issued first in 1539. In one of the two views of Greenland, a Norseman and pygmy confront one another with spears. In the other scene an Eskimo is shooting an arrow at a European ship; the strange-looking vessel near by is neither a kayak nor an umiak. Authorities agree that these are fanciful representations of Eskimos because the figures have none of their distinguishing characteristics.

More intriguing is a possible early reference to Eskimos as another map notation. The 1550 world map of Pierres Desceliers includes numerous illustrations as well as an acceptable rendering of eastern Canada. In the northern extreme a cluster of dome-shaped 'houses of savages' is shown, and nearby 'pygmies' are illustrated, hunting large birds close to similar dwellings. Perhaps these people represent Eskimos, and the dome-shaped structures, with building blocks showing clearly, are meant to be snow-houses. The caption beneath the pygmy illustration reports that the people were small in stature and had small ideas. They reportedly procreated at the age of three and died at eight years; they were described as brutes, not men, and were at constant war with birds.

The earliest illustration accepted as a portrayal of living Eskimos was produced at Augsburg, Germany, probably in 1567. The picture was printed as a single sheet, and the reason for its being issued in Germany is not known. Apparently the print was a broadsheet advertising the exhibit of a woman and her child. According to the text accompanying the print a French ship 'in search of strange adventures' sailed to 'Terra Nova' in 1566. Upon meeting a man with his wife and child, the sailors apparently attempted to capture the trio. The man was shot in the body with an arrow and was wounded on one side with a sword. He wiped blood from his side with one hand, licked it, and fought with increased fury. Finally he was killed but not before he had slain 12 French and Portuguese as food, 'for they prefer to eat human flesh to any other meat'. The mother's clothing and tattoos are characteristically Eskimo, and 'Terra Nova' probably was Labrador, which was occupied by Eskimos at that time.

A captured Eskimo woman and her child, drawn from life in Augsburg, Germany, c.1567. Traditionally the Canadian, Greenlandic and some Alaskan Eskimos have called themselves 'Inuit'; most Alaskan Eskimos use the word 'Yuit'.

A drawing, possibly of snow-houses, and of Eskimos meeting a European. From the northern Canadian portion of a world map issued in 1550.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

More groups of Inuit people were discovered during quests for the Northwest Passage to China than during any other European endeavour. The first such effort of note was by Martin Frobisher in 1576. He sailed the bark *Gabriel* beyond Greenland, and heading north-west he entered a broad water-way between land masses presumed to be America and Asia. Although Frobisher thought this was the northern border of Cathay, he had actually discovered a great bay along Baffin Island, the one that now bears his name. At the mouth of the bay, Frobisher and others landed and climbed a hill for a better view. They thought they saw porpoises or seals at sea, but as the forms drew near, they proved to be men in small skin-covered boats. Before the English could descend the hill, the people

landed and cleverly attempted to cut the sailors off from their boat. In written history this is the first clear English-Eskimo encounter, but these Eskimos were already familiar with Europeans, judging from their initial response to Frobisher, the iron they possessed, and the fact that they later performed acrobatics in the ship's rigging in the manner of sailors.

Friendly contacts were established, but the Eskimos soon seized a boat with five sailors aboard. Frobisher was unable to recover either the men or the boat, but he did manage to capture a kayaker whom he hoped to exchange for the sailors. When this proved impossible, the *Gabriel* sailed for England with the Eskimo and his kayak aboard. Frobisher's captive made a great impression on the stay-at-home English, but he did not live long to impress the curious. The Flemish artist Lucas de Heere, who was in England at the time, made a wash drawing of this man in which he resembles a European dressed in Eskimo clothing.

Before Frobisher left the Baffin Island area, his men went ashore to find objects that would substantiate a claim of discovery. Among the souvenirs was a piece of heavy black stone later judged worthless by several assayers but reported by another assayer to contain small flakes of gold. This led to a polar gold quest the following year. Three ships were sent to Frobisher Bay, and miners began digging the ore. Frobisher made every effort to find the sailors captured the previous year and to seize Eskimo hostages. In his attempt to capture two Eskimos, Frobisher was shot in the buttocks with an arrow, earning him the dubious distinction of being the first Englishman known to have been wounded by an Eskimo. One of the two Inuit was taken captive. Later when overland and boat parties surprised Eskimos in a camp, one man escaped in a kayak, and the other people launched an umiak. In their haste they left some of the paddles behind, and soon the umiak was being overtaken by Frobisher's boats. The Eskimos landed and apparently climbed to the top of rocks along the shore, shooting arrows at their assailants, who responded with arrows and musket fire. As the English gained an upper hand, a number of wounded Eskimos jumped into the sea, preferring death by drowning to capture. The others escaped on foot except for an old woman and another woman with a child on her back. Hiding amidst some rocks the younger woman was mistaken for a man, and a shot wounded the child before the three were seized. The sailors considered the old woman a witch and removed her boots to see whether she had cloven feet. When this proved not to be the case, she was released, but the mother and child were taken away. A pen and water-colour drawing was made of this skirmish by John White, the Elizabethan artist famous for his water-colours of Indians in the Virginia Colony. White may have been a member of this expedition, judging from the vividness of the battle

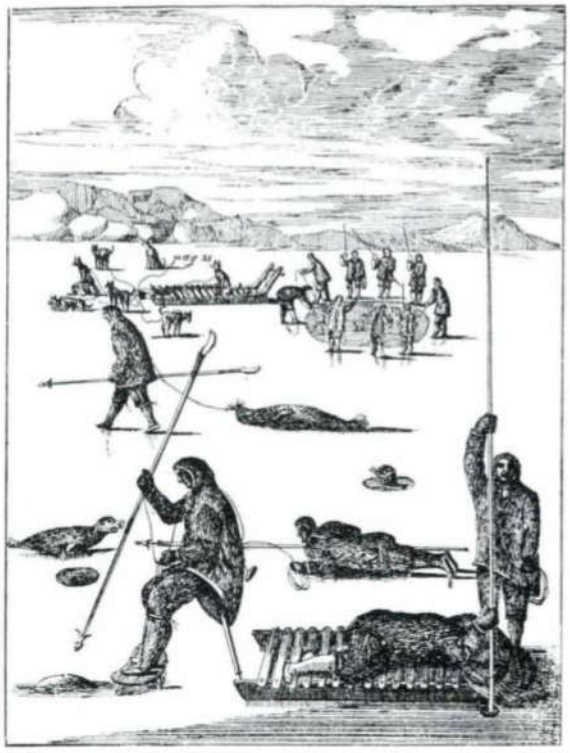
THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The skirmish between Baffin Island Eskimos and members of the Frobisher expedition in 1577. From a pen and water-colour drawing by the Elizabethan artist, John White.

scene. The three captive Eskimos were taken to England, but they did not live long after their arrival. In 1578 Frobisher led a larger expedition to the region to mine what was still presumed to be gold ore. The ore eventually proved worthless, and no Eskimos were encountered at close quarters. Numerous informative notations were made by members of the Frobisher expeditions about Eskimo appearance, clothing, and other artifacts, but their contacts with Eskimos were comparatively few and superficial. The English were convinced that Eskimos usually ate their food raw and were cannibals, but they could not even speculate about other aspects of their lives. These Eskimos usually were called 'people', less often 'countrie people' or 'craftie people', and 'villains' when they caused problems for the English. Thus the chroniclers of the Frobisher expeditions effectively introduced Eskimos to the English public.

The Eskimos of south-west Greenland were contacted by John Davis during his three voyages (1585, 1586, and 1587) in search of the Northwest Passage, and by Danish-Norwegian expeditions attempting to find descendants of the old Norse settlers. The most notable navigator employed by the Danes was an Englishman, James Hall, who made two voyages for them (1605, 1606) and a third sponsored by London merchants (1612) who hoped to mine 'silver'. These voyagers established friendly trading contacts with West Greenland Eskimos, but Eskimo thefts of iron and the capture of Eskimos by explorers

caused difficult moments. The Eskimos and their artifacts, especially kayaks and umiaks, were described but no more expansively than in the earlier Frobisher expedition reports. In general the Eskimos were considered 'very tractable' but idolaters who worshipped the sun, a judgment rendered primarily because as a form of greeting they pointed to the sun and struck their chests. Hall generalized that these people were related to the Samoyed of western Siberia. He prepared the first detailed regional maps of Greenland, and one included numerous representations of Eskimos. Before Hall left Greenland on his first voyage, he had three Eskimos and their kayaks seized. The Eskimos proved a fascinating attraction in Copenhagen. They exhibited their boating skills by manipulating their kayaks in dance-like patterns before a captivated audience. The Spanish ambassador to Denmark saw the performance and was so impressed that he gave the Eskimos a large sum of money. They bought the most fashionable clothing, including hats with ostrich feathers, swords, and spurs. After their appearance in this garb, they were called the 'Greenland Grandees'.

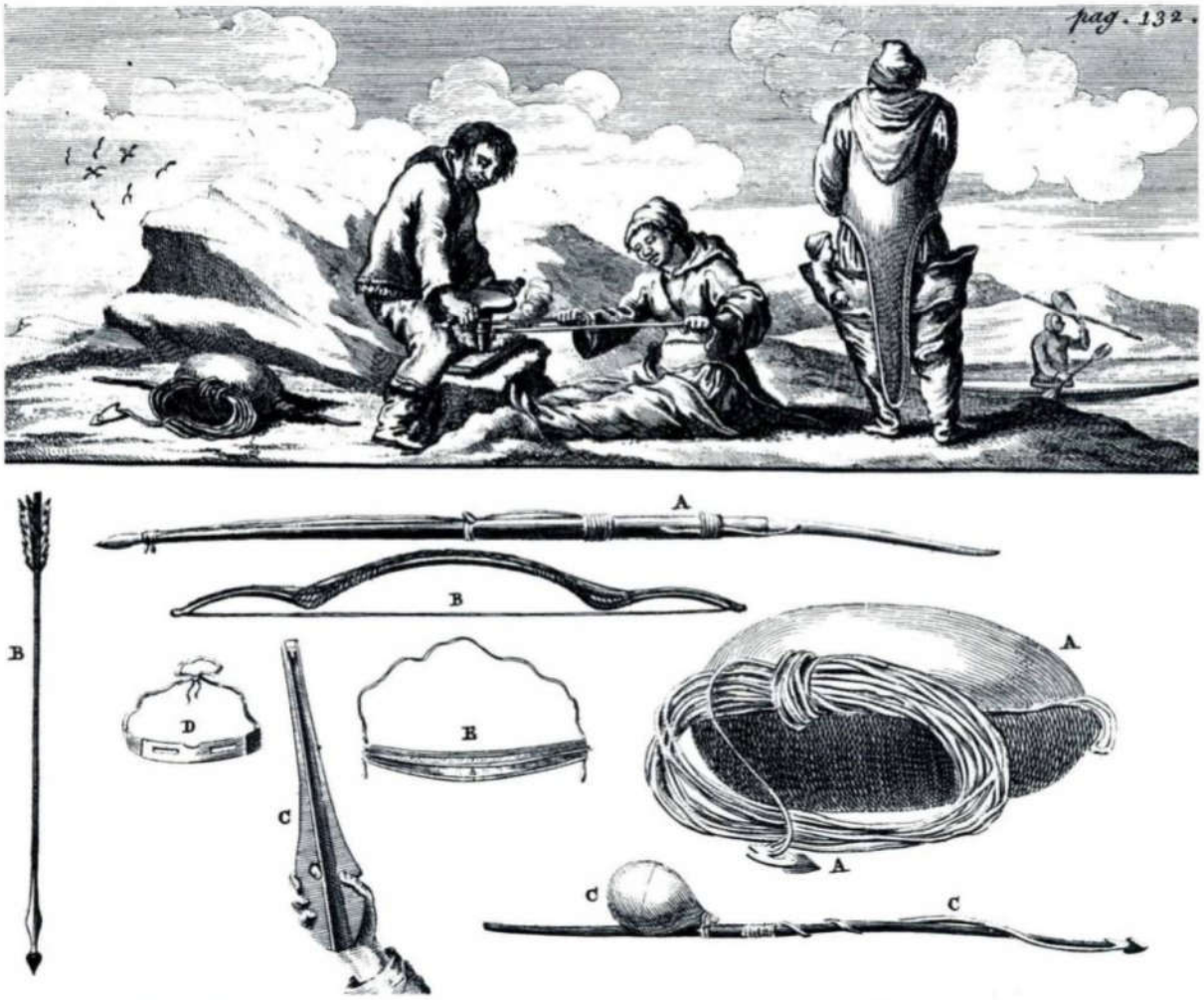


The sealing techniques of the West Greenland Eskimos. These were described by the Lutheran missionary Hans P. Egede, who settled in Greenland in 1721.

More than a hundred years later the fables, fabrications, and fancies about West Greenland Eskimos were dispelled, and the modern history of Greenland began. Hans P. Egede, a Lutheran minister, was most responsible for the recolonization; he was determined to find the old Norse settlers and convert them to the Lutheran faith. When he settled in south-western Greenland in 1721, he found no survivors of the Norse colony, but he laboured to convert the Eskimos to Christianity. On returning to Denmark, Egede wrote about his experiences, and his best-known work, *A Description of Greenland*, was published in English in 1745. After learning to speak Eskimo and spending many years among these people, Egede wrote perceptively about their way of life. It became clear that they were neither cannibals nor did they worship the sun. He considered them rude and physically unclean but a strangely flawless and nearly noble people. Among Egede's most notable contributions to Eskimo ethnography are his descriptions of the many ways in which they hunted and fished. He provided a compelling account of their daily lives and detailed the ordinary round of Eskimo activities. His book put Greenland back on the map and is the first major work about Eskimos.

A portion of a painting depicting the first encounter of Polar Eskimos and English explorers in 1818.

In the history of Eskimo ethnography the Polar Eskimos in the Thule area of north-west Greenland possibly have the greatest romantic appeal. They not only lived nearer the North Pole than any other people, but when discovered they had abandoned the typical summer side of Eskimo life. Unlike most Eskimos they did not make bows and arrows, kayaks or umiaks, bird spears, or fish spears. Their only weapons were harpoons, lances, and hunting knives.



The Inuit along Hudson Strait and in northwestern Hudson Bay were described by Henry Ellis in 1746. This drawing from his book shows 'Eskimaux making fire and Striking Seals'. Their equipment is as follows: 'A. The great Harpoon for Whales with its Barb Coil, & Buoy. B. The Bow & Arrow. C. The Small Harpoon, its Bladder & Barb, with the Instrument to dart it at the Seals. D. The Snow Eyes. E. The Breast Ornament made of a Seahorse Tooth.'

Furthermore, when first reported by John Ross in 1818, they apparently had lost contact with all other Eskimos and thought that they were the only people in the world. The first reasonably comprehensive Polar Eskimo account is by Elisha K. Kane, who wintered among them for two years (1853-55) while searching for survivors of the John Franklin expedition. In the multiple exposures of explorers to the Arctic, none thus far encountered depended as heavily on the Eskimos as Kane. He recruited a South Greenland Eskimo, Hans C. Hendrik, as a hunter, and he drew heavily on Eskimo technology. Kane travelled by dog team on Eskimo-type sleds, his men wore Eskimo-style garments, and the second winter they converted their ship into an Eskimo-like dwelling and depended on Eskimo-style lamps for heat. Kane's account of his voyage, *Arctic Explorations in the Years 1853, '54, '55,* appeared in 1856 and was extremely popular in the United States; nearly 20,000 copies of the two-volume work were sold prior to publication. It seems that Kane was to a large degree responsible for High Arctic Eskimos being judged the most 'typical' by many persons. Robert E. Peary on his numerous trips to Greenland before he reportedly discovered the North Pole in 1909, depended heavily on these people and helped build their world-wide reputation as the outstanding group among Inuit people.

In Canada for 250 years following the discovery of Hudson Bay in 1610, voyagers strove mightily to locate the Northwest Passage. Notable among these explorations, as far as Eskimos were concerned, was the passage search launched in 1746 by Arthur Dobbs, an Irishman, and best chronicled by Henry Ellis. Ellis wrote about Eskimos in the Hudson Strait region and north-western sector of Hudson Bay in a concise but reasonably enlightened manner. He wrote appreciatively about their styles of harpoons, sinew-backed bows, clothing, and snow-goggles, but he also held mistaken opinions. He thought, for example, that Eskimos were the only people who ate animal food

A winter camp in the Igloolik area, 1822. George F. Lyon and William E. Parry spent two winters in Igloolik and described the Inuit way of life in detail for the first time.

The first satisfactory report of Inuit life in the Mackenzie area was written by the missionary Émile Petitot who worked in northwestern Canada from 1863 to 1878. The Mackenzie Inuit lived in relatively permanent settlements of wooden houses.

absolutely raw. The contacts Ellis had with Eskimos were comparatively superficial, and his account suffers accordingly. This was not true of George F. Lyon and William E. Parry, who authored the first expansive accounts of Canadian Eskimos. In their passage search they spent two winters (1821-23) among the Igloolik Eskimos of north-western Hudson Bay. They came to appreciate the difficulties the people had in surviving, their philosophical attitudes toward privation, and their kindness. Lyon and Parry described their snow-houses and other aspects of their living in enough detail so that Canadian Eskimo culture vividly came to life for the first time. Only after explorers and others began wintering among Eskimos were the realities of their life-style stripped of fanciful embellishments and Eskimo adjustments to their environment were appreciated more fully than ever before.

The first explorers in north-western Canada, men such as Samuel Hearne (1771), Alexander Mackenzie (1789) and John Franklin (1821, 1826), contributed very little to our understanding of the Eskimos there because effective contacts with them were few or non-existent. Not until the Roman Catholic missionary Émile Petitot worked in the area (1863-78) do we have a reasonably satisfactory report. He described the Mackenzie Eskimos in considerable detail even though he spent most of his time among northern

Athapaskan Indians. Mackenzie-area Eskimos represented a dimension of Inuit culture different from that reported to the east. For much of the year they occupied wooden houses, and they maintained men's houses at their relatively permanent settlements. Men wore lip plugs or labrets, unlike other Eskimos to the east, and certain men were designated as 'chiefs'.

Among Eskimos of the Bering Strait region, the first explorers were Russians. They contributed comparatively little of substance about aboriginal Eskimo life. In an early report on Eskimos in western Alaska, Petr I. Popov in 1711 described the people as having tails like dogs, a reference to the male custom of wearing a belt with a fox or wolf tail hanging from the back. The earliest effective contact with Alaskan Eskimos was made by Stepan Glotov when he wintered on Kodiak Island in 1762-3. The account stresses the bellicose reception accorded him by the Koniag or Kodiak Eskimos, but it contains comparatively little else of significance. On his third and final voyage that originated in 1776, the stellar explorer James Cook sailed to the north-west coast of North America, north of the Aleutian Islands, and through Bering Strait into the Arctic Ocean. After Cook visited Prince William Sound and cruised into the Bering Sea, he noted parallels between the Eskimos he saw and the Greenlanders about whom he had read. Because of the similarities in dress, weapons, boats, and language across the Arctic regions he offered the opinion 'that all these nations are of the same extraction', a clear and early statement about the unity of Eskimos east and west based more on data than on speculation. Cook did not describe the Eskimos he saw in detail, but he did broadly define the limits of their distribution in the Western Arctic.

The earliest illustration of Eskimos (or Yuit, as most Alaskan Eskimos call themselves) in the Norton Sound area of Alaska. After his voyage of 1776 James Cook noted similarities in dress, weapons and boats between the Eskimos of Alaska and the Greenlanders about whom he had read. He offered the opinion that 'all these nations are of the same extraction'.

A young woman of Umanak, Greenland. Painted in 1896 by Russell Porter, who travelled north with Robert E. Peary.

It often is reported that the first use of the word 'Eskimo' was in 1611 by a Jesuit missionary, but this is not so in a technical sense. In 1584 Richard Hakluyt wrote about colonizing eastern North America and used the word 'Esquimawes', but his essay was not published until 1877. Where Hakluyt obtained the word is mystery. Most authors agree that the term 'Eskimo' is from an Algonkian language spoken by Indians in the vicinity of the St Lawrence River; whenever a particular tribe is identified as originator of the term, it is the Abnaki. It translates as 'Eaters of Raw Flesh' and probably was a derogatory label rather than a neutral term of reference. Today the Canadian Eskimos have strongly indicated that they prefer to be known as Inuit — meaning 'men' or 'the people' — the name which they have traditionally applied to themselves. ◆

Fresh earth is pushed out quickly at the mouth of a tunnel.

A brief pause to check for danger . . .

SILENT EARTH MOVERS

By Robert W. Nero

Photographs by Robert R. Taylor

LATE ONE NIGHT while driving across a weedy field in southern Saskatchewan several years ago I saw a small, dark mammal in the car headlights. I slammed on the brakes and flashlight in hand, ran in the direction I'd seen the animal go. There, to my surprise, was a pocket gopher trotting along through the sparse grass. It was long past midnight, dark and cool, and it was an unexpected sight. I had found and captured many other small mammals, particularly pocket mice, deer mice, meadow voles and other species, by running them down at night, but this was my first pocket gopher. With some trepidation, I cupped one hand over it, pinning it to the ground, and tried to decide, while it struggled to free itself, if I dared risk picking it up. It was soft as silk, but muscular; the thought of its sharp incisors kept me hesitating for a moment. Then I slid my hand around it, cupped it in both hands and waited, breathlessly, until it settled down.

Fortunately, it was docile, showing no signs of aggressiveness, so I continued to hold it in my hands, enjoying its unfamiliar shape. It was a pleasant moment which I recall well. The air was redolent of the tangy scent of crushed sage plants, and the wide plains were silent under a starlit sky. Walking back along the sandy trail to the car with my new captive, I wondered what errand I had so abruptly interrupted. For what purpose had it been scurrying along in the middle of the night? From all accounts, nocturnal surface meanderings of pocket gophers are primarily made by males in search of a mate. Leading isolated lives, they venture out only when the urge to reproduce sends them forth at certain times of the year for the critical social contact that ensures continuance of the species. Travelling over unfamiliar ground, hurrying along in search of the exciting scent and contact with another of their kind, theirs is a journey of utmost significance.

Dr Nero, wildlife biologist with the Manitoba Department of Renewable Resources, is author of numerous papers and articles on the wildlife and natural history of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. He, with Photographer Robert Taylor, has produced a forthcoming book on the Great Gray Owl.

. . . and the pocket gopher emerges.

Seldom seen above ground, pocket gophers live in a subterranean world, quietly carrying out their affairs in underground burrows. They are well adapted to this mode of existence, having several features associated with a life spent mainly in dark tunnels. Like moles, with which they are often confused, they have inconspicuous external ears, small eyes, and a fine, grey or brownish glossy fur. A short, sparsely-haired but highly-sensitive tail permits them to run backwards as easily as forwards in their narrow burrows. Enlarged shoulder musculature and heavy front limbs, including specialized forefeet bearing long, sharp claws, enable them to excavate the burrows and chambers in which they live. These silent earth movers dig tunnels by gnawing and scratching, shoving the loosened dirt, stones, and roots beneath their bodies, then kicking it backwards with their hind feet. When a quantity of earth has accumulated behind them, they turn about in the narrow burrow in a curious but effective manner, by performing a somersault. Then, pushing forcefully with head, breast and forefeet, they move dirt along the length of the burrow and pack it into old tunnels or move it up and onto the surface of the ground. In this way they excavate burrows to reach food, construct chambers for storing food, for sleeping quarters and toilets. Large biting teeth protrude outside the mouth cavity, serving as a means of cutting through obstructions and foodstuffs without getting a mouthful of dirt. A pair of large upper and lower incisors are characteristic of rodents, and it was the awareness of these sharp teeth that had made me cautious about handling a freshly-captured animal of this size. Later, I captured a few other pocket gophers in the same way and found them all to be relatively gentle creatures. Nevertheless, many other observers have reported pocket gophers as being belligerent.

The most unusual feature of this animal is the basis for the first part of its name. Large external cheek pouches or pockets, which lie outside the mouth, serve to carry food and nesting material. The pockets are made of thin skin and are lined with fine hair. They have a large capacity and, when filled, may double the apparent size of the head. Chipmunks and other rodents fill their cheeks until bulging, but the food is inside the mouth. (In western Canada, only two other mammals have external cheek pouches: kangaroo rats and pocket mice.) Although the enlarged front claws would seem to preclude ready handling of food, pocket gophers use both forepaws to quickly stuff their cheek pouches and they can just as easily empty them. Bulbs, rootstocks, growing grain, and other plant parts, including grasses and forbs on the surface, are sought for food and often stored in quantity in large chambers.

The most conspicuous sign of the presence of pocket gophers is the occurrence of mounds of earth lying on top of the ground, usually with no sign of an entrance. These mounds consist of the soil from extensive burrows, often hundreds of feet in length. The soil is pushed out at intervals along a burrow at night, early in the morning or late in the evening. One pocket gopher may have mounds scattered over an acre or more of ground.

From Manitoba westward across the prairie provinces to the coast, and over most of the central and western United States, pocket-gopher mounds are a familiar sight. Most mounds are from one to three feet in diameter and only a few inches high. Larger mounds, sometimes a foot or more in height, can be a nuisance for farmers. Especially in hay meadows, high mounds interfere with cutting. Pocket gophers are also responsible for considerable loss of agricultural products, but in many areas they cause no harm. In non-agricultural areas they play a large role in tilling the soil, burrowing through clay, gravel and soil, heaping enormous quantities of this material on top of organic materials and thus enriching the ground. They are an interesting native animal, known to few people, though their conspicuous mounds can hardly be overlooked.

Along highways, their freshly-formed mounds of earth are often a distinctive element, decorating right of ways with colourful patterns. In many areas, these earthen mounds may contrast strongly with green growing vegetation; the heaps of yellow, reddish or brown earth form signs of pocket-gopher activity and reveal the colour of the subsoil. Depending on the season and locality, pocket gophers may burrow as deep as six feet, though ordinarily they work from four to eight inches below the surface. Once, in a grey-

A pocket gopher out in the open; the dark band on its back shows the molt pattern. Only two other mammals in western Canada have external cheek pouches: the pocket mouse and the kangaroo rat, shown below.

Pocket mouse — found in sandy, arid areas from Manitoba to Alberta.

The kangaroo rat is actually a large mouse, known only in a few localities in extreme southeastern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan.

coloured, sandy, freshly-cultivated field, I saw a straight line of mounds of a paler hue stretching for two hundred yards out into the field, marking the trail of a particularly well-oriented and venturesome pocket gopher. Intensive cultivation in some cases may confine most of their activity to roadsides, and then their mounds may be almost side by side. Although they do not hibernate, in cold latitudes pocket gophers keep to their underground burrows, living on food gathered and stored before winter has set in and the ground has frozen. Towards spring, in mild weather when the ground has thawed, however, they may begin moving excavated soil to the surface again, working unseen beneath the snow. The soil brought to the surface is packed into tunnels in the snow, just as it is often shoved into old burrow systems underground. The earth-filled snow tunnels sometimes extend for considerable distances and, as Seton shows in one sketch in his series *Lives of Game Animals*, published 1925-1928, may go over a tree limb lying on the ground. When the snow has disappeared, long worm-like casts remain, curious and temporary phenomena, varying in texture and durability with soil type. Two and one-half to three inches in diameter, these extensive branching forms indicate the inside diameter of underground burrows. With the first warm rain they dissolve, in some cases adding to the problem of erosion. This unusual feature is something to look for each spring.

Years ago, at university, I helped a colleague capture pocket gophers by standing quietly in a meadow at dawn, watching for signs of movement in fresh mounds. As soon as we saw the loamy soil heaving, we rushed forward with spades and drove them into the ground in an attempt to block off adjacent burrows. Then we began a frantic but careful digging to try to capture a live specimen. I do not recall that we were all that successful. Other observers have quietly watched pocket gophers emerge briefly, pushing and shoving dirt with their broad heads and large forefeet.

A heap of pocket-gopher skulls beneath a cliff-side Prairie Falcon eyrie in badlands southwest of Regina taught me that pocket gophers must be more active on the surface than is generally realized. Or, perhaps, in the heavy clay soil of that area gophers had greater difficulty burrowing and finding food, and were forced to surface more often than usual. On that dazzling bright and warm day, standing at the foot of the cliff, picking through the pile of old bones and debris, I could only marvel at the quantity of broad, flat, pocket-gopher skulls, while thrilling to the constant keening of the falcons circling overhead. I had not supposed that pocket gophers could be so abundant in that generally barren and arid basin. Cahalane, in his book *Mammals of North America*, published in 1947, points out that on sunny mornings pocket gophers

often unplug a burrow leading to a mound, exposing themselves presumably for fresh air and sunlight. Often they crouch in the opening, sunbathing for an hour or two. It is undoubtedly during this period that they are taken by daytime predators such as falcons. Soaring hawks may have learned to watch for the glint of eyes or slight movements in the centre of fresh mounds. Unlike moles, which, as they burrow immediately beneath the surface, often leave a ridge as they progress, pocket gophers usually burrow deeper.

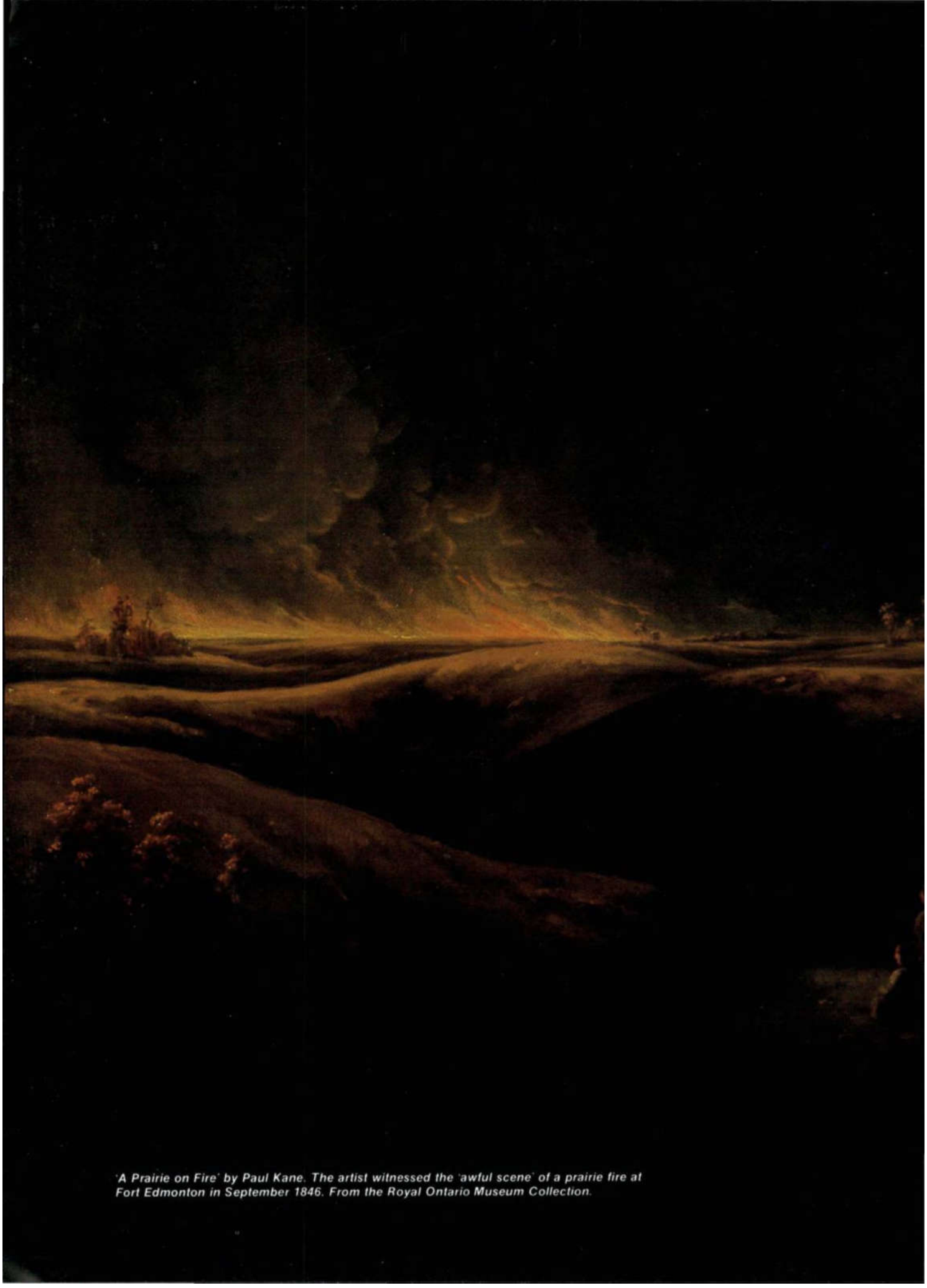
In one instance, however, shallow-burrowing pocket gophers were successfully captured in the daytime by a Great Gray Owl. C. A. Tryon, Jr tells how he watched a Great Gray on 9 June 1941, in the Bridger Mountains of Montana, take four gophers in about three hours in one afternoon. 'The four gophers were caught in the same spot. The first caught was probably heard digging by the owl, which gave every indication of listening to some sound before swooping. Inspection of the spot while the owl was away revealed that the owl had apparently broken through the thin roof of one of the feeding runways of the gopher's burrow. Lack of turf (due to constant tunnelling by the gophers in this area) would make such an action easy. The other three were probably caught as they attempted to plug that break in the tunnel with dirt. Though pocket gophers are chiefly solitary animals, the young gophers are active and still in the parental burrows at this time of year in the Bridger Mountains.' When viewing film footage taken at a recent Great Gray Owl nest near Edmonton, and shown by Al Oeming, I was surprised to see a pocket gopher brought to the nest by the male owl. This, too, was in the daytime.

Pocket gophers that wander about at night in search of mates or new territories are undoubtedly preyed upon by many predators, including owls, foxes, coyotes, and badgers. The latter can dig them out of the ground, though with so wide a network of runways in which the pocket gopher can travel, it must be a difficult feat. Weasels and snakes pursue them into their tunnels. This constant pursuit by day and night has long been thought to give them an aggressive disposition. The docility of those few I captured may have been due to gentle treatment or sheer luck. Since they are solitary creatures for the most part, one can understand their lack of sociability. Forced by evolution to an underground existence, they succeed, due to their many adaptations to such a life.

When I walk across a field that is littered with pocket-gopher mounds, I like to think of one of them crouched in its burrow, waiting for the creak and groan of my footsteps to subside. Perhaps it even faintly hears the bobolink's cheerful song overhead, in the bright, warm sunlight, while remaining still, and largely content in its world of darkness, rich earth, and moist roots. ◆

Visible in spring, right after the snow melts, are fresh pocket-gopher mounds and the peculiar root-like casts, the result of dirt packed into tunnels in the snow.

In agricultural land the mounds can be a hindrance to farm operations.



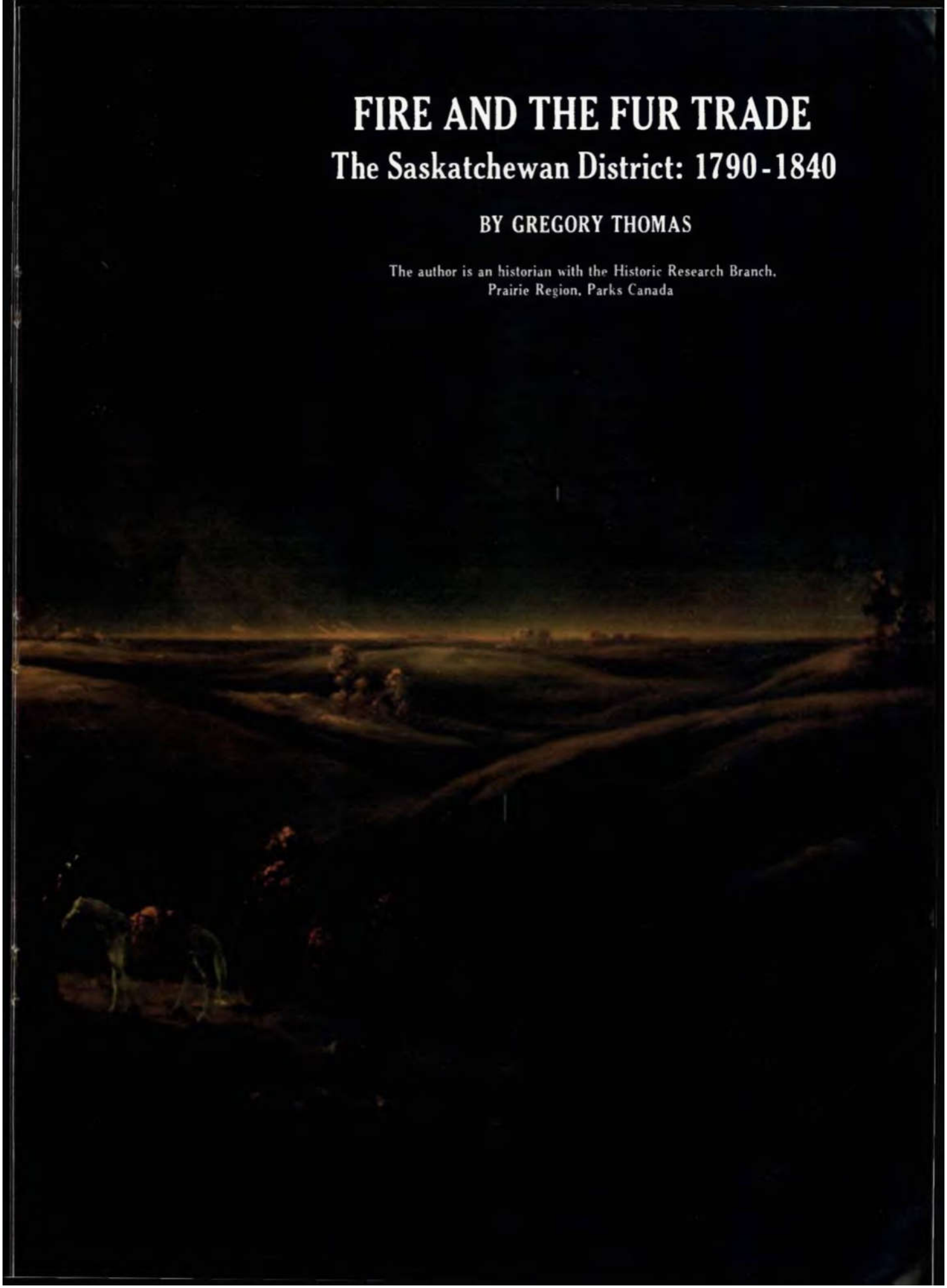
'A Prairie on Fire' by Paul Kane. The artist witnessed the 'awful scene' of a prairie fire at Fort Edmonton in September 1846. From the Royal Ontario Museum Collection.

FIRE AND THE FUR TRADE

The Saskatchewan District: 1790-1840

BY GREGORY THOMAS

The author is an historian with the Historic Research Branch, Prairie Region, Parks Canada



LATE IN OCTOBER 1836, a band of excited Stone Indians informed J. P. Pruden, chief trader at Carlton House, that a rampaging plains fire was moving rapidly towards the fur-trade post. The experienced Hudson's Bay Company officer did not panic. Methodically, he ordered his men to remove the gunpowder to the cellar outside the palisade, cover the vulnerable haystacks with leather tents, and cast up a large quantity of water. By nightfall, the fire was raging 'awfully' within half a mile of the fort. As the flames appeared in the tall grass on the south bank, the wind suddenly calmed. Pruden dispatched all hands immediately to the banks of the Saskatchewan where they proceeded to 'knock out' the fire with 'bunches of old leather fixed on poles of about six feet long.' By midnight the real danger had passed.

As the fur traders penetrated farther into the Saskatchewan River District in the late eighteenth century, they were confronted by a spectacular and potentially dangerous phenomenon: the plains fire. Whether caused by man or nature, these grass fires could sweep rapidly across the vast plains from Cumberland House in the east to the Rocky Mountains in the west; from the Saskatchewan River in the north as far south as the Missouri. In the process, they substantially altered the landscape and threatened to bring the fur-trade operation in the crucially important Saskatchewan District to a standstill. In particularly dry years such as 1812, 1828, and 1836, fire caused widespread starvation among the plains Indians and considerably impeded the operations of the Hudson's Bay Company. Yet, while the fur-trade interests in the Saskatchewan District never did control the outbreak of the devastating fires, they did develop methods of protecting their posts from their greatest natural enemy.

Once the Hudson's Bay Company made the decision to establish their first inland post on Cumberland Island in 1774, the penetration of the Saskatchewan River District followed slowly but surely. To meet the strenuous competition of the Canadian 'Pedlars' and then of the North West Company, a succession of posts was built from Cumberland House near the mouth of the Saskatchewan to Acton House at the foot of the Rocky Mountains. From the outset, the fur traders were more interested in the lands drained by the northern branch of the Saskatchewan than in the region of the Bow River, their name for the southern branch of that great inland highway. This was logical, as the northern branch gave access both to the northern wooded belt where furs were most readily available and to the prairies which provided the fur traders' main sustenance, the buffalo.

The Hudson's Bay Company's posts on the Saskatchewan occupied strategic points. Edmonton House, first built above the mouth of the Sturgeon River in 1795, stood at the eastern end of the 'traverse' to Fort Assiniboine, whence the outfits passed onwards to Lesser Slave Lake, to New Caledonia, and to the Columbia. Fort Carlton, near the traditional wintering ground of the bison, was a productive pemmican post. During the winter months the dried meat was transported from Carlton to Green Lake, and then forwarded in the spring by canoe to Ile-à-la-Crosse in time to intercept the northern brigades.

Shortly after the fur traders began to push up the Saskatchewan, they found their activities impeded by the prairie fires. In the fall of 1779 William Tomison, a prominent Hudson's Bay Company trader, accompanied Robert Longmoor upriver 'twelfe days Paddel against the current' and built the outpost of Hudson House. They were joined in the immediate vicinity by two groups of Canadian traders. From the outset, the fur traders suffered from a severe food shortage compounded by a smallpox epidemic among the natives. Longmoor and Tomison discovered that the Indians of that area were determined to divert the buffalo from the Hudson House region. If there were no bison near the trading posts, the Indians reasoned, the white men would be unable to procure their own rations, and the natives could acquire all the European goods they needed by selling meat at famine prices. Consequently, to enhance the value of their provisions, the local Cree and Assiniboine set fire to the plains with devastating success. By the autumn of 1781 the buffalo had been driven so far afield that the Indians themselves came to Hudson House begging for food. In a letter to Cumberland House dated 18 January 1781, Robert Longmoor summarized the situation:

> The Ground is all burnt, and no buffallo, the Natives burnt it as they were nigh hand in the fall and far from the Beaver Country, in purpose that they might get a great price for provisions, but great part of them has payed for it since, by Hunger and oblidged to go far off . . .

While most contemporary observers could only speculate upon how prairie fires were started, the fur traders' repeated accusations lend credence to their theory that the Indians started fires to enhance the value of their provisions. The prairie tribes were fully aware that the Hudson's Bay Company officials at the Saskatchewan trading establishments were particularly interested in procuring provisions. Besides concerning themselves with the accumulation of pelts, they were responsible for the provision of staples such as pemmican to the eastbound and westbound brigades. This responsibility was formalized by the Council of the Northern Department in 1833 when it resolved that the Saskatchewan District was expected to produce some 600 bags of pemmican yearly.

Other students of the plains fire have elaborated upon its use to control wildlife movements. Henry

GLENBOW-ALBERTA INSTITUTE

Buffalo stampeded by a plains fire, as dramatized by an anonymous artist. Such fires often diverted the buffalo from their traditional grounds with serious consequences for the fur-trade in the Saskatchewan District.

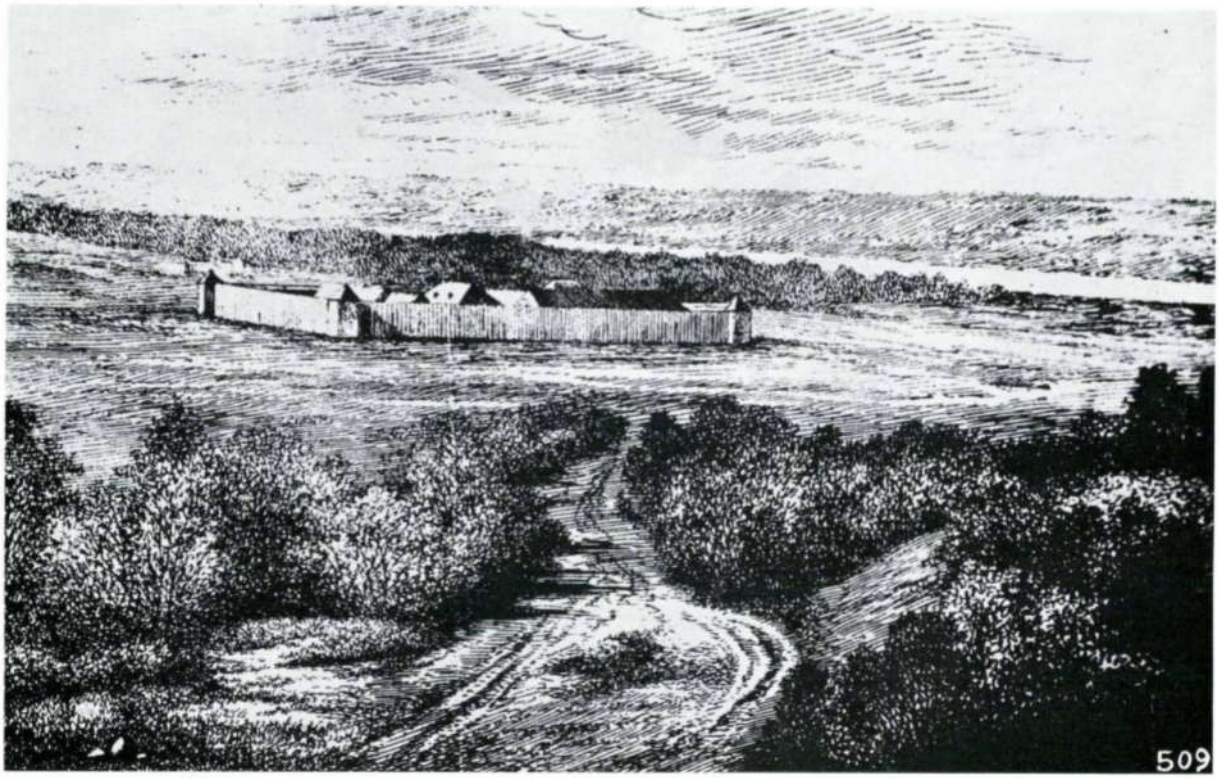
Youle Hind surmised during his 1857-58 expedition to the West that one function or objective of the prairie fire was to turn the buffalo. In the case he observed the buffalo had crossed the Saskatchewan at the elbow heading in an easterly direction. By burning the prairie east of their course, the Indians diverted the herd southward. Sometimes fires were started early in the year to promote grass growth later in the season. In the journals of Lewis and Clark, an entry for March 1805 records that the Minnitarees or Gros Ventre Indians had set all the neighbouring grass ablaze to obtain an early 'crop' for their horses and also to attract the buffalo and other wildlife to the area. The Indians in the North Saskatchewan District may have lit fires purposefully, but there is no surviving evidence from the early fur traders to support this supposition.

In the eyes of the traders a more obvious motive for setting prairie fires in the Saskatchewan District was revenge or outright malice. Certain Indian tribes, particularly the Stone, set fires simply to harass the fur traders. The Edmonton post journal for 14 October 1826 commented that the plains were on fire and speculated 'that it must be either done accidentally by Joseph La Doceur tenting with our hunters or by those roving scoundrels the Stone Indians who have a full power of doing such an injury perhaps out of revenge for the 9th [of October].' On that particular day some Stone Indians were severely reprimanded by the Chief Factor at Edmonton House for attempting to steal horses. Several years later at the same location a group of Assiniboines, some of whom were in disgrace for stealing, set fire to the long grass across the river before hurriedly departing for their encampment. This particular fire threatened the Edmonton agricultural operation on the south bank of the river. Late in the following autumn at Fort Carlton, three Stones inexplicably lit fires in the grass outside the establishment. Before the servants were able to bring it under control, the flames had destroyed the garden fencing and threatened to spread to the palisades. In these situations there was little the Hudson's Bay Company officials could do other than reprimand the natives responsible. They were hopelessly outnumbered and dealt with the war-like plains tribes on the latter's terms. The fur traders could not afford to alienate the natives if the Saskatchewan District were to continue to return its handsome dividends to the Company's shareholders.

The plains fire was obviously a potentially lethal weapon in the operation of the fur trade. There was

COURTESY OF A. G. PRUDEN

Chief Trader John Pruden of Fort Carlton. The vital role of this fort as a fur-trade centre and supply depot was threatened by its susceptibility to prairie fires; and several precautionary measures were developed to protect it. Below is Fort Carlton as it appeared in the 1860s.



considerable tension between the rival trading companies in the Saskatchewan District. In 1792 William Tomison and his men constructed a trading post, Buckingham House, a short distance from the 'Canadian' house, Fort George, approximately 100 miles downstream from the later Edmonton House. The following spring every available Hudson's Bay Company servant was involved in fighting a fire which threatened to destroy the Company's house and canoes. Tomison claimed that this fire was set upwind and on purpose by order of Angus Shaw, the trader in charge of Fort George. Tomison repeated these charges several years later when a fire consumed thirty pieces of lumber collected for the construction of the first Edmonton House. Certainly, if these fires were intentionally set, they illustrate how far the North West Company was willing to go to achieve supremacy in the trade. At the same time, fires in the neighbourhood of Buckingham or Edmonton House might also have endangered the Canadian establishments near by. There is no conclusive evidence to confirm either that the North West Company employees were responsible for these fires or that Tomison was merely expressing his ingrained distrust of his rivals.

Whether these prairie fires were started by man, accidentally or on purpose, or by natural forces such as lightning, they were potentially very dangerous both to humans and animals. Duncan McGillivray, a clerk at Fort George in 1794-95, recognized the threat posed to wildlife:

> The Plains around us are all fire. We hear that the animals fly away in every direction to save themselves from the flames, an attempt which is often rendered abortive when the fire is cherished by a breeze of wind, which draws it along with such fury that the fleetest horse can scarcely outrun it.

The fire which broke out in the Edmonton area in 1798 illustrates how threatening these prairie fires were to man. In May of that year Tomison estimated that no less than eight Indians had burned to death within a period of ten days. During the disastrous fires of 1812, eleven Blackfoot Indians were 'consumed' in the flames near Paint Creek House on the Vermilion River. Some years before, Peter Fidler, travelling along the Saskatchewan, had commented upon the danger of fires. On that occasion the camp-fire had spread out of control so rapidly that Fidler, in a matter of minutes, was forced to abandon his equipment, mount his horse, and hasten westward. With the right combination of wind and dry conditions, plains fires could travel with incredible speed and jump streams as broad as the North Saskatchewan. The only escape was to reach a body of water or to outdistance the fire on horseback.

The Saskatchewan District was particularly prone to fires in an autumn following an unusually hot, dry summer. When the Hudson's Bay Company trader, James Bird, was preparing to build the fourth and final Edmonton House in October 1812, such a fire suddenly raged out of control in the surrounding district:

> The Plains are and have been these several days past burning in a most dreadful manner, fires are still raging in all directions, and the sun obscured with smoke, that covers the whole country, and should the remarkable dry weather which has continued so long, does not change very soon, the plains must be burnt to such an extent as to preclude all hope of our getting a large supply of provisions . . .

The fires of 1812 were the most devastating to hit the Upper Saskatchewan since the arrival of the fur trader. So destructive to game was the blaze, Bird was compelled to send his men fifty miles away to fish. The success of that expedition was imperative; Bird had learned from a Sarcee band that from Edmonton to the banks of the South Saskatchewan 'there is not a bull to be seen nor a bit of dry ground unburned.' At Carlton House, J. P. Pruden confronted the same dire predicament of starvation among the natives and shortages of provisions.

To compound an already difficult situation, the plains were on fire once again in the autumn of 1813. On this occasion the fires were burning in the more heavily forested region north of the Saskatchewan. By the time rain and snow extinguished the fires in mid-October, the damage was done. Because the extent of the fires drove the buffalo southward 'the Indians were bringing in very little and come principally to get more supplies on credit.' In the process their economic reliance upon the fur-trade companies was increased. Correspondingly, fur returns for the season declined at an alarming rate throughout the Saskatchewan District. The monetary value of furs procured at Edmonton House, for instance, fell nearly eight hundred pounds from the 1812 to the 1814 season. It was a very dejected James Bird who wrote to his colleague at Swan River in February 1814:

> Trade is extremely poor. Dry provisions very scarce, and as we are quite abandoned by the buffalo, our living is of course far from being enviable . . . The Plains for sixty miles round this place were entirely ravaged by fires last fall and the consequence has been that we have neither seen an Indian from that quarter nor heard of a buffalo since that time.

The sudden absence of the Plains Indians was a discouraging sign for the Hudson's Bay Company and its rivals. The trading companies in the Upper Saskatchewan District had struggled diligently to establish a trading rapport with the Blood, Sarcee, and Peigan tribes of the powerful Blackfoot nation. Suddenly the combination of extensive fires and inter-tribal warfare had driven these natives south into present-day Montana. Not only was this too far away for them to visit the Saskatchewan posts during the winter months, but the Indians were exposed to American trading interests penetrating the upper reaches of the Missouri. Fortunately for the English

PAC

'Prairie on Fire', a water-colour by Alfred J. Miller from a sketch made by the artist in 1837 while travelling with the American Fur Company. American fur traders protected their temporary camps by burning a space to meet the fire. This practice was less common in the Saskatchewan District where the HBC operated from fixed posts.

and Canadian concerns, the return of more moderate weather in 1814-15 diminished the prospects of large fires and allowed the buffalo to migrate northward to their traditional grazing grounds. By the autumn of 1815 there was once again a large stock of dry provisions in the Edmonton House store-room, and Indians were reappearing in the vicinity. This strongly suggests that the ecological damage of these immense fires to the vegetation of the prairie was short-term in nature. The extent of harm caused to the forest cover, however, is impossible to establish on the basis of documentary sources.

By the time the rival fur-trade companies amalgamated under the auspices of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821, the intermittent appearance of prairie fires was an acknowledged fact in the North Saskatchewan District. As the Company hierarchy proceeded to introduce a pervasive policy of retrenchment and consolidation, the remaining Company servants at the Saskatchewan posts realized that they would confront future fires with a drastically reduced labour force. In order to meet this altered situation, Hudson's Bay Company officers and servants began to devise preventive measures to protect their posts from the potentially devastating impact of the prairie fire.

The chief factors and traders in residence at Company posts provided the driving force behind the introduction of precautionary measures. Ultimately they were the ones who had to explain to Governor Simpson and the London Committee why there was not enough birchrind for canoes or why pemmican quotas were not met. The first Company officer to take official preventive measures against fire was Chief Factor John Rowand of Edmonton House. In a memorandum for the men who were to be left in charge of the factory during the summer months, Rowand informed them that all inflammatory materials must be cleared away from near the fort. This was to guard against Indians lighting any fires. Furthermore, Rowand emphasized, 'the Fort residents should be ordered to kindle no fires near the establishment or should they, to extinguish the same upon leaving it.' The Company was also developing its agricultural venture on the site of old Fort Augustus, and the men were instructed to burn the grass in the immediate vicinity of haystacks. This protective measure became a regular practice at Hudson's Bay Company farms.

Since Carlton House was situated on the south side of the North Saskatchewan River, virtually at the gateway to the grasslands, Chief Trader Pruden lived with the threat of fire throughout much of the year. The officers at Carlton developed a set procedure when a fire threatened their establishment. They had any explosive material such as gunpowder immediately removed to the root cellar, a heavy guard was posted, and if the blaze actually approached the post, every available resident was dispersed to beat out the fire with the assistance of rather primitive pole contraptions consisting of a large ball of leather attached to a long stick. As a further precautionary measure, Pruden ordered his men to dig a trench behind the house to connect a spring, one hundred and twenty yards away, to a small reservoir at the corner of the fort. A wooden pipe carried the water inside the fort. This arrangement, Pruden surmised at the time, 'will be very convenient in case the slave Indian may lay siege to the Fort, as also in case of fire.'

These preventive measures were designed primarily to protect the trading establishments themselves from the ravages of fire. There is no evidence to suggest that patrols were dispersed to combat prairie fires by the technique described by Hind: setting fire to the grass downwind of the blaze thereby depriving it of its fuel. Consequently, when large fires broke out, even after 1821, the residents of the Saskatchewan posts remained for the large part at the mercy of the elements. In 1828, for instance, a series of fires in the close proximity of Edmonton House disturbed the operation of the fur trade from May to November. In the spring the fires delayed the sowing of the crops and interfered with the collection of provisions for the spring brigades. In September 1828, every available person, including the local Crees, was 'employed in the hills beating the fire so as to prevent it coming down in the flat point being the only part that is not burnt.' On this occasion the density of the smoke and the damage to the grazing land delayed the organization and departure of the Columbia brigade until early December.

At Carlton House, the fires continued to break out almost every year from 1821 to 1840. In fact, the frequency of fire in the Carlton district appears to have been considerably higher than in the Edmonton area. J. P. Pruden becomes almost casual in his references to fire in the post journal:

> The ground in fire all round the Fort sent part of the men to beat it out and to burn the grass all round the gardens to prevent the fire from spreading towards them . . .

Governor Simpson, however, was increasingly concerned by Carlton's susceptibility to fire and its failure to meet its provision quotas. Since the smooth operation of the Saskatchewan District was crucial to the overall harmony of the Northern Department, Simpson ordered the construction of Fort Pitt farther up the North Saskatchewan River in 1829. This move relieved the heavy pressure on Carlton House and, to a lesser extent, on the Edmonton factory.

The post journals for the Saskatchewan District from 1840 to 1855 have not survived and it is impossible to evaluate the frequency and impact of fires in this period. There is little doubt that the conflagrations continued to obstruct the daily operations of the fur trade. Shortly after the artist Paul Kane arrived at Edmonton House in 1846, he described the 'fiery embrace' of a prairie fire:

> The scene was terrific in the extreme: the night being intensely dark gave increased effect to the brilliancy of the flames. We were apprehensive at one time of its crossing the river to the side on which the fort is situated, which must in that case have been destroyed.

Despite the natural apprehension generated by these fires, no Hudson's Bay Company post and its inhabitants was actually consumed by fire. Losses were restricted to the odd building, fence, supply of wood, and the occasional haystack. Generally, the prairie fire represented an uncomfortable interruption in the fur-trade operation rather than an unmitigated disaster.

The most difficult questions concerning fire are related to their ecological impact upon the prairie landscape. Most nineteenth century observers support the contention that the fires contributed considerably to the extension of the grassland environment south of the North Saskatchewan River. Undoubtedly, Palliser and other informed observers were correct in their speculations that over an extensive period, the prairie region had gradually been denuded of trees by recurrent fires. At the same time, the rapid recovery of the fur trade after years of large fires and the return of the buffalo to the Saskatchewan District strongly suggest that the grassland ecosystem was tremendously resilient. Within a year of fires which had razed the landscape between the two branches of the Saskatchewan River, the ecological balance had recovered sufficiently to support the natives and wildlife once again.

As far as can be determined, the Hudson's Bay Company did not have formal written regulations regarding fire control; precautionary practices at the posts were, for the most part, the responsibility of the officers in charge. These men realized that there was only a limited number of feasible defences against the ravages of fire. Hence, they concentrated upon protecting the post itself by clearing rubbish, keeping water on hand, and burning the grass around agricultural locations. Throughout the fur-trade era, these precautionary measures served to protect the trading post from destruction by fire. The Hudson's Bay Company officers fully realized that this phenomenon was but another force in a complex environment which they must respect if they were to survive. ◆

Eliza Field and the Reverend Peter Jones. From portraits painted in London during their courtship.

Eliza and the Reverend Peter Jones

By Donald B. Smith

The author teaches history at the University of Calgary.

IN LATE SEPTEMBER 1833 Kahkewaquonaby, or to use his English name, the Reverend Peter Jones, arrived at the Credit River Mission with his English bride. It is difficult to imagine how the settlement must have looked when Eliza first saw it that September afternoon. The Government Inn at the river mouth, the solid oak and pine forest on each bank, and her new home in the Indian village two miles upstream no longer exist. Nearly a century and a half has passed and urbanization is in full control: high rise apartments, A & Ws, gas stations and power transmission lines. A quarter-of-a-million people live in the area that several hundred Indians once claimed as theirs. The original inhabitants are gone and time has erased all but the tribe's name, dutifully preserved in the name of the Toronto suburb, Mississauga.

Last July I visited the Credit River searching for some memorial to Eliza. I began my tour by the harbour in front of the Ontario government's blue and gold historical marker indicating the site of the old Government Inn. It was here at the river mouth in 1805 and 1818 that the Mississauga surrendered what today must be some of Canada's most valuable real estate, a huge tract of land of over 2,000 square miles lying between present-day Hamilton and Toronto. From the harbour I drove up 'Mississauga Road', a beautiful tree-lined avenue. Then about two miles from the lake, just beyond the Queen Elizabeth Highway, I saw another of the Ontario Government's historical plaques. It almost touched the steel fence enclosing the grounds of the Mississauga Golf and Country Club. The plaque, simply headed: 'Credit Indian Village. 1826', gave a complete account:

> In 1826 the government assisted a band of Mississauga, who had recently been converted to Christianity, to settle in this vicinity, and within five years laid out a village plot and constructed log cottages and a sawmill. Methodist missionaries, notably Peter Jones and Egerton Ryerson, ministered to the converts, who in 1829 built a combined schoolhouse and chapel. By 1837 about 50 houses had been erected for the Indians. Three years later they had approximately 500 acres under cultivation. Pressure from local white settlement and a decline in the Indian population led to the closing of the mission and the return of the major portion of the Mississauga to the Grand River Reserve in 1847.

About a hundred yards to the north was the entrance driveway and beyond it, the original site of

Peter Jones's Indian village. At the end of the drive — on the edge of the hill overlooking the Credit River Valley — stood the clubhouse, an impressive Tudor-style mansion. It recalled the fact that Eliza had rejected the comfort and privileges of her English family's wealth when she left to live in the poor Indian village to work for the salvation of her husband's people.

All the Indians' hewn-log cabins are gone, although the Club's prospectus states that 'the chief's hut formed a base for the 16th tee'. In the 1830s, on the site of the private golf course, nomadic Indian hunters and fishermen struggled to become settled farmers. Today few people have heard of Peter and Eliza Jones; a century and a half ago their marriage was one of the most talked-about events in Upper Canada.

Eliza Field's marriage to an Indian caused a sensation at the time. While some white men had lived with Indian women in the early days of the colony, few were legally united. And white women did not marry Indians, even Christian 'civilized' men like Peter Jones. As late as 1852, Susanna Moodie, a leading Upper Canadian author, had one of her characters in *Roughing it in The Bush* indignantly exclaim: 'I cannot think how any lady of property and education could marry such a man as Jones.'

Today interracial marriages are becoming common; but 150 years ago such unions, in Upper Canada at least, were extremely rare. When Eliza accompanied Peter among white settlers she found (she wrote on 6 September 1834, one year after their marriage) that 'my peculiar situation in connection with my dear husband excites much unpleasant curiosity. I feel myself gazed on wherever I move.' Several newspapers publicly predicted that the interracial marriage would not last.

The opposition of the white settlers was but the least of Eliza's problems. She came from a sheltered and privileged background; nurtured in ease, she had never lived in straitened circumstances. Nor did she know the rigours of a Canadian winter, the cold and the snow. She had always lived in well-heated, comfortable houses, and from childhood had been served by half-a-dozen servants who prepared the family meals and constantly stoked the household fires. How would she fare in a log cabin on the Credit River?

Eliza faced the difficult task of adjusting to the culture and society of her husband's people. The Credit Indians had only accepted Christianity a decade before, and it still remained not much more than a veneer over their old beliefs. The old people still lived in a different world. To them the forests and rivers were living things just like persons, with their own moods and feelings. There were places in the forest many would not go, for well after their acceptance of Christianity many continued to believe in the supernatural.

DONALD B. SMITH

The clubhouse of the Mississauga Golf and Country Club now dominates the area where Kahkewaquonaby and his devoted English bride laboured a hundred and fifty years ago. The impressive Tudor-style mansion recalls that Eliza rejected the privileges of family wealth to live in the Mississauga Indian village.

JOHN ROSS ROBERTSON COLLECTION – METROPOLITAN CENTRAL LIBRARY

The Mississauga (as the white settlers called the Ojibwa on the north shore of Lake Ontario) who greeted Eliza would have been dressed as these Ojibwa Indians were. A sketch by T. Hibbert Ware, of Ojibwa Indians at Coldwater, just north of Lake Simcoe, in 1844.

It was a difficult task, but Eliza was stronger than one would at first suspect. She had two unassailable inner strengths: first, she deeply loved and admired her Indian husband, and secondly, she strongly believed in her 'mission'. She had been born and brought up in the full religious fervour of the English evangelical movement, and she came to Canada to make her own contribution to the expansion of Christianity throughout the world. Her belief in the importance of helping to convert the 'heathen' had already given her the strength to marry her husband over the opposition of her family and many of her friends. As she joyfully recorded in her diary on 20 September 1833, her first day at the Credit Indian Village: 'Oh! who can repent having left their home, their country, their Parents, brothers and sisters, for the sake of Christianity'.

Eliza had married a remarkable man. Kahkewaquonaby or Peter Jones — his two names, Mississauga and European, indicate his two cultures — was the son of a white surveyor, Augustus Jones, and a Mississauga woman. He spent his first fourteen years with his mother's people, and seven with his father and his legal wife (an Iroquois woman) on their farm on the banks of the Grand River. Before his conversion to Christianity in 1823, and his return to his people a year later as a Methodist missionary, the young Mississauga had learned the 'white man's way' and how to compete with him on his own terms. He came back full of hope, believing that if the Indians could successfully adjust to a settled agricultural way of life it would be difficult for anyone to discriminate against them. At the Credit Mission he was determined to teach the Mississauga the skills of the white man that were necessary to make them self-sufficient competitors in the white man's world.

Peter's abilities, and his ease in both Indian and European worlds, quickly attracted the attention of his church, the Methodist Episcopal of Upper Canada. In 1831 they sent him to England to raise money for the Canadian Indian missionary work. It was there that he met and fell in love with a pious English woman, Eliza Field, the daughter of a wealthy soap and candle-maker. On 8 September 1833 Peter and Eliza were married in New York; then after a short vacation they left for the Credit Mission.

The account of a British army officer describes how the village must have looked when Eliza first arrived. The officer, Captain J. E. Alexander, visited it around 1830, and wrote 'we found ourselves on an elevated plateau, cleared of wood, and with three rows of detached cottages, among fields surrounded with rail fences; below a clear stream abounding in fish, rushed

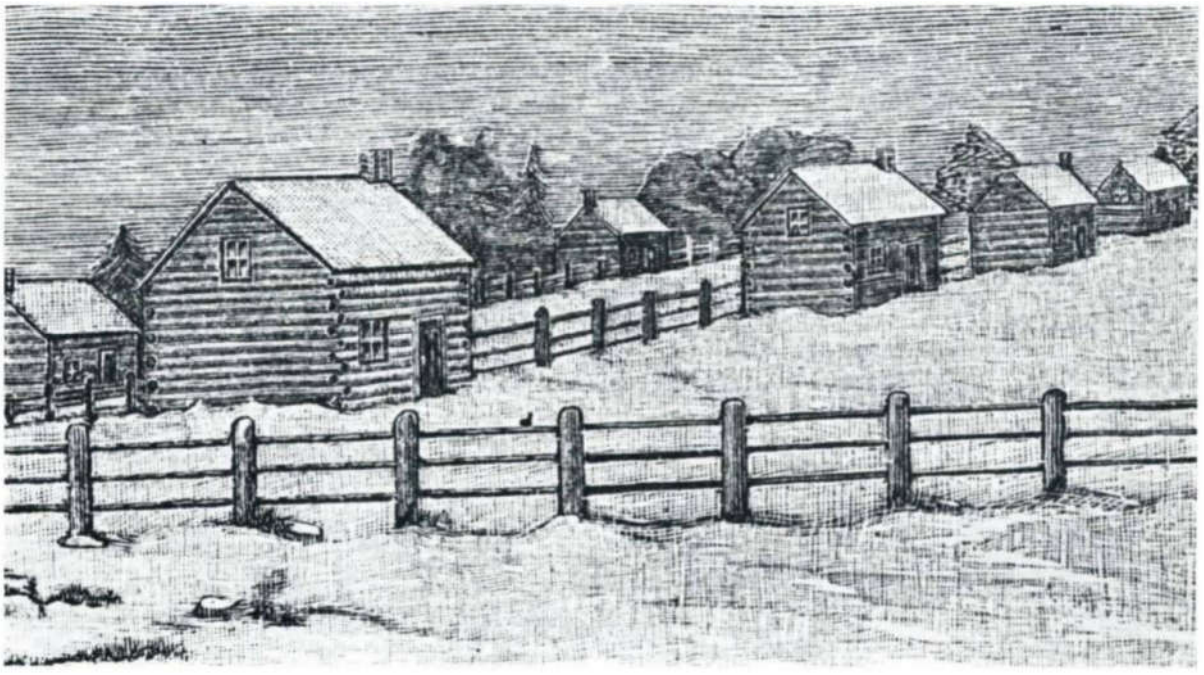
over its rocky bed to join the waters of Lake Ontario.' A good man for detail, Captain Alexander then noted the dress of those who welcomed him. The men wore 'light moccasins of deer-skin ornamented with porcupine quills . . . blankets or grey surcoats descending to the knee . . . leather or cloth leggins'. When he arrived the women 'sat on the grass in groups, with the hood of their blankets or dark mantle, drawn over their heads; their leggins were scarlet'. Eliza would have been greeted by a similar scene.

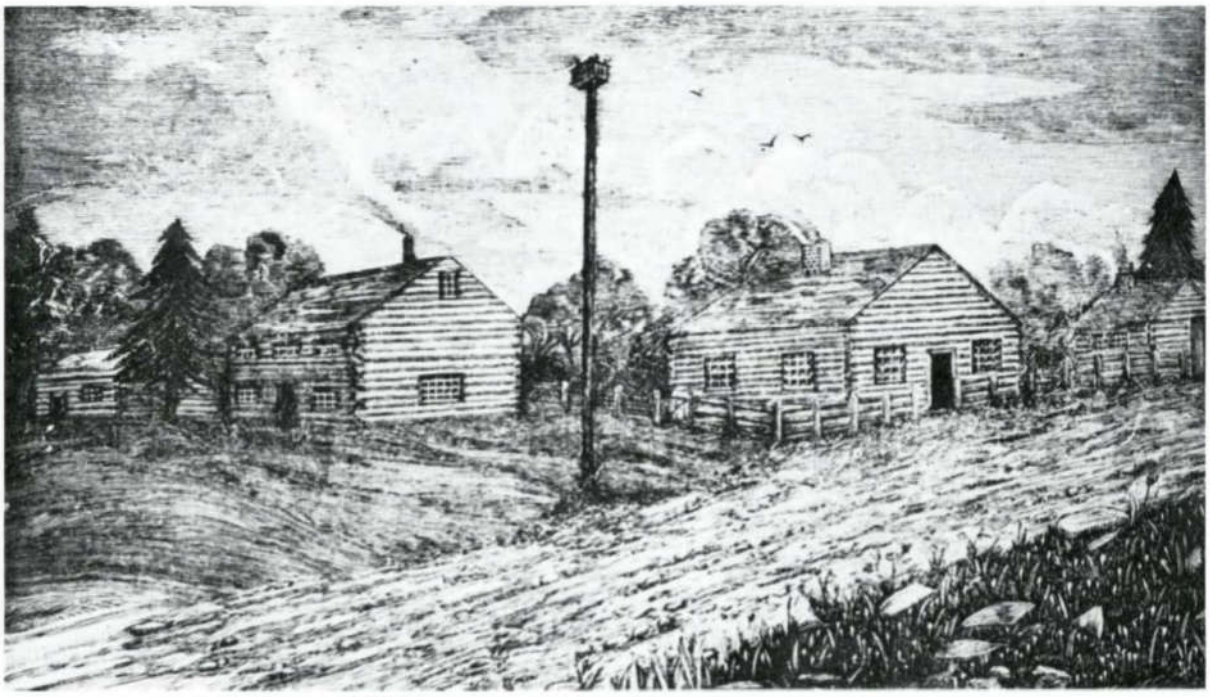
The ride from York (in 1834 the name of the town would become Toronto) took Peter and Eliza five hours by horseback. They arrived at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. In her diary Eliza noted enthusiastically: 'My heart was full, too big for utterances. I felt that now I had entered the scene of my future labours'. They went first to the home of Peter's brother where John's wife, Christine, 'received me kindly' and 'numbers came in to welcome us'. Christine was the granddaughter of Joseph Brant, the celebrated Iroquois war chief. Well-versed in English and familiar with white people she became in the weeks to follow, one of Eliza's closest friends.

Eliza's introduction to her new station in life came that evening when her husband took her to their modest dwelling. She later described it: 'My first Canadian home was one room, which my dear husband called his study with a bedstead, a writing desk, a table and a few chairs, Indian mats on the floor, and round the bedstead — an open fire place'. But its modest appearance had no dampening effect on Eliza's high spirits. The next day she joyfully wrote in her diary: 'Rose this morning with a grateful and a happy heart, felt as contented in my humble dwelling as tho' I had risen surrounded by the splendours of a Palace'. The next week Eliza, a trained artist, sketched her 'first Canadian home' and the school and church which stood beside it, and sent the drawing to her friends in England.

On the fourth day, a Monday, Eliza visited the Indian school where forty Mississauga children were in attendance. The scene that met her eyes may be visualized from a contemporary description of the school written by William Lyon Mackenzie, the fiery editor of the *Colonial Advocate*, who was later renowned as the leading instigator of the Upper Canadian Rebellion of 1837. In December 1830 Mackenzie reported that the Credit Mission schoolhouse was large and contained 'tiers of raised benches (like a gallery) in the rear; on one division of which sit the girls, and the boys on the other'. Around the schoolroom were Bibles and Testaments, English and American books, a 'handsome' map of the World, 'attractive alphabets on pasteboard', the picture of Elijah fed by ravens, arithmetic figures, coloured pictures of animals, and 'the figure of a clock, in pasteboard by which to explain the principles of the time-piece'. Mackenzie concluded his quick review of the school where Indian children learned 'the white man's way' with this remark: 'The walls of the School are adorned with good moral maxims; and I perceived that one of the rules was rather novel, though

'Indian Village the River Credit in 1827 — Winter'. From Egerton Ryerson's 'The Story of my Life'. Two Indian families lived in each of these houses.





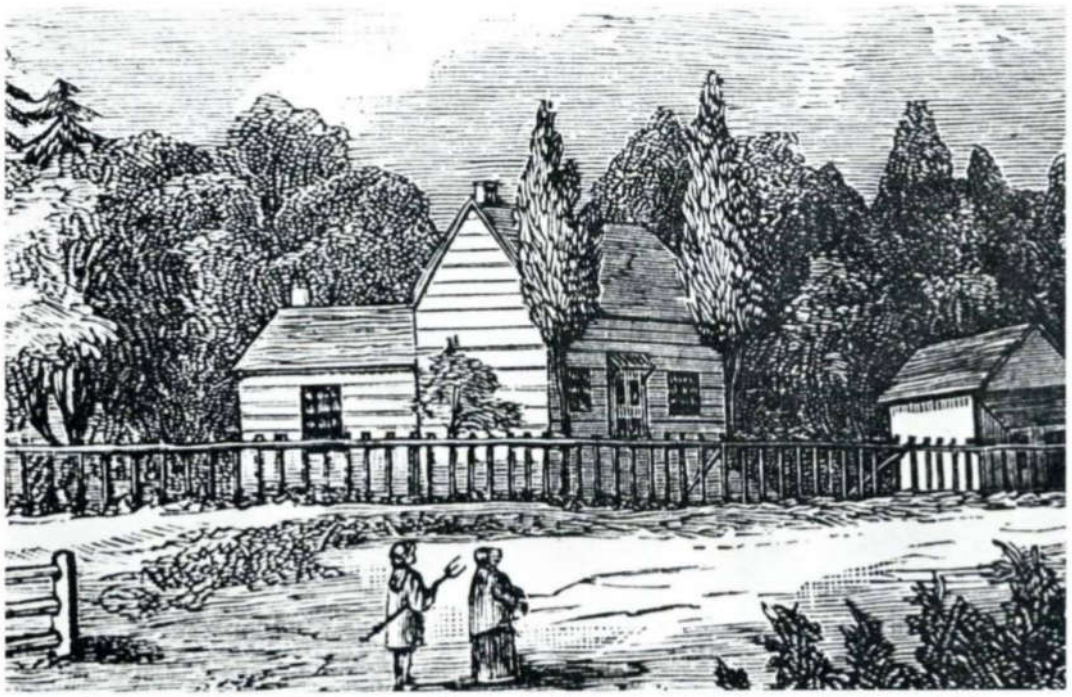
A week after her arrival, Eliza sketched her 'first Canadian home' and sent the drawing back to England. From left to right is the school, council house, church and Peter Jones's study where he and Eliza lived.

doubtless in place here: It was, "No blanket to be worn in School".'

At the school Eliza saw the impressive results of the first decade of work with the Mississauga children. After her visit she wrote in her diary: 'the children sang well, their writing very good, the boys have made good progress in reading', but she noted one shortcoming. As the daughter of a soap manufacturer in London her obsession is not too difficult to imagine. Eliza was appalled by the 'want of neatness in the school and cleanliness about the children'. The following week she spoke to the white teacher, Miss Verplank, about 'getting aprons made for the children and washing apparatus that they may present a cleaner and neater appearance at school.' This passion for cleanliness characterized Eliza's generation in England where the phrase 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness' would soon become a household saying.

In her first weeks at the village Eliza seemed to be adjusting well. A canoe ride with Peter was one of the highlights of her first month. Joyfully she noted in her diary on 19 October: 'had my first paddle in a canoe, enjoyed it much, my husband very handy'. Eliza spent her days visiting, helping Peter copy out his translations, and making clothes for the needy Indian children. Peter's devoted mother Tuhbenahneequay (who had once, when her son hurt his leg as a small boy, carried him 30 miles with the help of a friend, from the Credit River to the present-day site of Hamilton) accepted her son's English bride. On 1 October she gave her daughter the appropriate gift of a washing basket. And in those first few weeks Eliza frequently visited Christine (then into her ninth month of pregnancy), and drew very close to her. Eliza wrote of her friend on 18 October: 'the more I know her the better I like her, may our friendship increase and may we be mutual blessings to each other'. In those first few weeks she seemed to be on a cloud of euphoria. In early October she even hired at York (probably with the help of a stipend from her father) a servant girl to help her with her work at the Indian village.

In the second month Eliza's spirits began to change. As she slowly realized the vast cultural gap separating her from her husband's people, her holiday mood evolved into one far more serious and profound. The Indian people never knocked on the door, for example; they entered without warning. On the morning of 15 October she suddenly felt a presence, and then saw a shadow fall across the floor. 'This morning' she calmly wrote in her diary 'without ceremony before I was dressed an Indian man came in, this is common'. Other habits of the Indians surprised her. After several Indian men came to talk to Peter one afternoon, Eliza recorded 'they annoyed me much by spitting, this is a dirty habit, but it is a little trial I must bear patiently'. Her greatest frustration, though, was not the lack of privacy, or her concern with cleanliness, but her inability to understand Ojibwa. The entry for 28 October reads: 'Several Indian women came and sat with us, oh! how I long to understand their language and converse with them fully'.



The home of John and Christine Jones. Eliza sketched her brother-in-law's house in the 1830s, probably before it became 'a house of mourning' through the death of Christine and her infant child.

Eliza's resources of strength — physical and spiritual — were tested when in her sixth week in the village. Peter was absent on a missionary tour to the Grand River, nearly 100 miles away. All that spring, summer and fall, the village of slightly over 200 Indians had been stricken with ague, and intermittent fever — a malaria, carried by mosquitoes in the marshland in the valley. Then more serious illnesses developed. During Eliza's first month in the village, four Indians — including the tall, robust John Crane — had suddenly died. Then — but a day after giving birth to a baby boy — Christine Jones fell ill. On 1 November John Jones came to ask Eliza for a bottle of castor oil for his wife. By the 2nd, Christine's condition had deteriorated still further. To help John with the baby and to comfort Christine, Eliza 'proposed sitting up with my dear Sister'.

The entry for Sunday 3 November simply begins, 'a night of most painful anxiety'. Christine was 'in great agony, high fever and inflammation, she appeared fast hastening to another world'. And all night John lay writhing on the floor from the pain of his finger festering from blood poisoning. Eliza had never experienced this aspect of life before — a dear friend dying before her eyes, a brother-in-law tortured by pain, and their four-day-old child crying constantly. Eliza stayed and helped all she could. At 5:30 in the morning when she left the 'house of mourning' a strange sensation chilled her, 'a strong foreboding seemed to whisper, prepare for sorrow, disappointment and death . . . As I walked alone to my solitary dwelling I felt that I was in circumstances different to any I had ever experienced before, now I thought my trials are beginning'.

Christine died later that day. Eliza offered to keep house for John, although she wrote in her diary 'I felt my great insufficiency for every thing of the kind but with a desire to do my best I hope and look for divine assistance'. No longer was there time for reading; she wrote on 13 November 'every hour brings its full employment'. Then another blow fell on the 15th — Christine's infant child died and was buried. Eliza wrote: 'When I awoke this morning I felt the most distressing weight on my spirits. I could for a time only sob and try to pray'. She then called upon her reserves of strength. By 18 November we know that she had conquered her depression. The entry for that day is triumphant: 'I am where my God hath led me and altho' very far from so many loved ones, I have a kind husband and many undeserved comforts and if I have but the love of God in my heart all must be well'. In two months, life on the Mississauga Indian Reserve had transformed Eliza from the girl-woman she was when she arrived, into a stronger, a more impressive and mature woman.

The following months went by quickly. Many days proved so busy that for long periods Eliza neglected making daily entries in her diary. She and Peter moved into the larger house he had built for her in early December 1833. There Eliza cheerfully taught the Indian girls to sew, instructed them in religion, and assisted Peter in copying out in her fine hand his

Catharine Sunegoo (Mrs Catharine Sutton) who attended the Credit Mission School and recalled Eliza's kindness to her. From a daguerreotype probably taken in the late 1840s, and now in possession of the Owen Sound and Grey County Museum.

translation of the Bible. Years later in 1847 one of her early visitors, Catharine Sunegoo, wrote to her expressing her gratitude: 'Dear sister when I was a child you gave me clothes to were [wear] . . . you taught little Indian girls in that little house a cross the road and you taught them how to sew and many other things . . . When I look back in days that are past and gone how good you were to CB Sunegoo who once lived at Credit what a naughty girl she was not to [k]now you[r] kindness'. Eliza saved the letter for the rest of her life.

The villagers most eager to adopt Christianity and 'civilization' — those who unconditionally supported Peter Jones — came to like Eliza. They slowly adjusted, and warmed to this white woman who had come to live among them. They called her Kecheahgahmequa, 'the lady from beyond the blue waters'. Perhaps it was her own suffering that helped to endear her to them. At the Credit Mission Eliza had two miscarriages and bore two dead babies between 1834 and 1836. During her confinements the Indian women gave her herb medicine. After Eliza lost her first two babies her friend Mrs John Keshegoo, offered to allow her to raise (in Eliza's words) 'her oldest little girl, a child I have taken a great fancy to, as being quick and interesting'. But Eliza, still hoping to bear her own children, reluctantly turned down the generous offer of her Mississauga friend.

Throughout their first years of married life Peter and Eliza knew that many white settlers were watching them closely. Eliza had no sympathy for those with such a perverse curiosity. As the well-bred Englishwoman wrote in her diary on 6 September 1834, 'I desire to be enabled to feel charity to such who from the want of education or refined delicacy towards the feelings of a stranger make me an object of general observation.' She came to appreciate the Indian people more. After a year or so at the Credit River, Eliza recorded how superior was the 'refinement' of the Indian women to that of the white settlers. 'Many of the people in this country do not seem to know what good manners mean, they have nothing like the natural refinement, delicacy and modesty of Indian women.'

On 17 May 1837 Eliza, fulfilling a 'promise having been made to my father when I was married that I should visit England in four years' left for England. Peter, who would follow after a missionary tour of Manitoulin Island, saw his wife off at New York. Scarcely a week after her departure, the New York *Sun* on 26 May carried the following article on column one of its editorial page. Under the caption 'Mrs. Peter Jones' it began:

> The romantic lady who some three or four years since created quite a 'sensation' in this city by giving her hand in matrimony to Peter Jones, a converted Indian, has returned to England, as we understand, for her health. It will be recollected that she became enamoured of Peter during his missionary tour in Europe, and despite the remonstrances and intercessions of relatives, collected her wordly gear, which was very considerable, and embarked for this city, where for some time she awaited the arrival of her swarthy adorer, with a constancy not to be shaken by the tremendous battery of entreaty, argument and ridicule, where with from all sides she was assailed . . .

In Upper Canada many believed that Eliza had abandoned Peter. The English traveller, Anna Jameson, reported in her *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* published in 1838, that Mrs Jones whom she described as 'a young enthusiastic English woman', had permanently separated from him. But, of course, Eliza had not. Eliza had adjusted to the white settlers' hostile opinion of her marriage, to the rigorous climate of her new land, and to her life on an Indian mission. After Peter's second missionary tour of Britain and his audience with Queen Victoria they returned together to Canada. The best years of their marriage lay before them. In 1839 Eliza gave birth to her son, the first of five. A new life began for both Peter and Eliza. Her diaries and his letters tell the tale of their last twenty years. Together in the early 1840s, Peter and Eliza faced their greatest challenge — the revolt of roughly one-half of the reserve against the Methodists' attempt to transform the Credit Indians into what twentieth-century native leaders would term 'brown white men'.

The story will be resumed in a subsequent article in *The Beaver*. ◆

The Grand Rapids Tramway

A Centennial History

By Rodger Letourneau

Mr Letourneau is an historian with Parks Canada, Prairie Region, Winnipeg.
Permission of the HBC to use quotations from its archives is gratefully acknowledged.

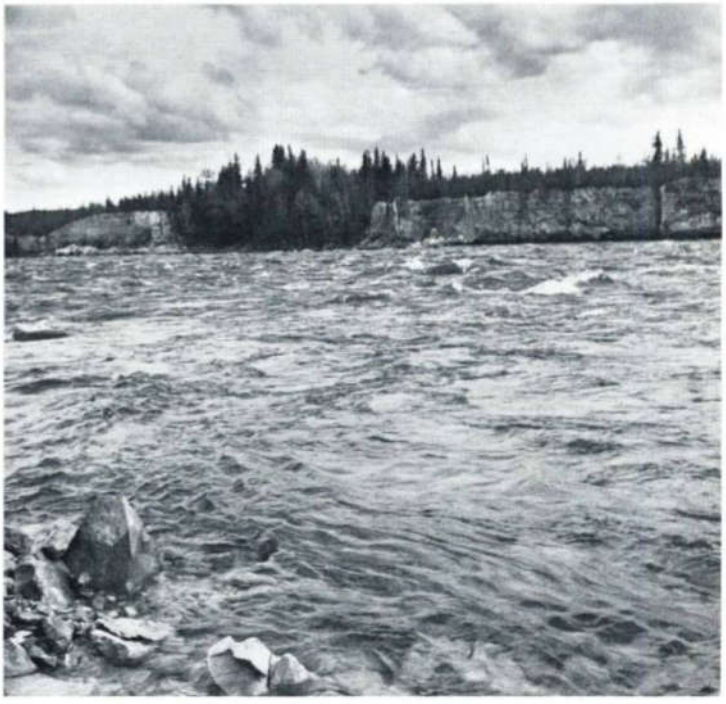
ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, the Hudson's Bay Company laid down the first railway in Canada's old Northwest. It was unquestionably a modest affair: three and one-half miles of frail, narrow-gauge track, mules and horses for motive power, six pieces of four-wheeled rolling stock and a hand car. But its last spike was hammered home in the autumn of 1877, and that event made the Grand Rapids tramway a first in the western interior. Its builder was Walter Moberly, the assistant surveyor general of British Columbia, who discovered the Eagle Pass through the Rockies and who, in 1870, was in charge of the mountain surveys for the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

For generations the canoe brigades of the Hudson's Bay Company had paddled up the Saskatchewan to the foothills of the Rockies. The most formidable hazard along this course lay two miles from where the river emptied into the northern part of Lake Winnipeg; here the Saskatchewan dropped some 70 feet over four miles in a series of extremely turbulent rapids. For decades the story was the same for the canoemen: upstream, a strenuous portage, pulling the frail birch-bark craft against the current with ropes; downstream, perhaps a partial portage and sometimes a terrifying and occasionally tragic passage through the churning water with half-laden canoes.

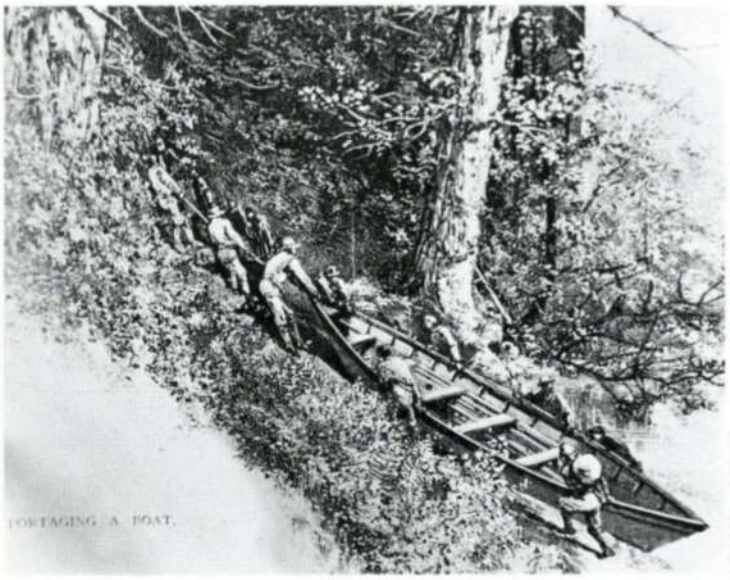
By the end of the eighteenth century the sturdy, flat-bottomed York boat largely replaced the fragile freighter canoe. The York boat could take on four times the cargo; yet it was too ponderous to drag upstream with ropes. Along the old portage trail, therefore, a succession of logs was laid over which perspiring crews rolled their cumbersome craft. At last, the Saskatchewan route was abandoned as a major transportation artery because the boat brigades, continually plagued by sickness, the elements and, at times, plain apathy on the part of the men who manned them, met with indifferent success. Consequently, for some fifteen years the 'outfits' for the north-western districts were dispatched over the rolling prairies by Red River carts.

In this fashion it might have continued had not the white man introduced the Industrial Revolution into the 'great lone land'. While the squealing carts jolted across the prairie and the parkland fringe, to the south American railway builders blazed a path of steel into Minnesota. Soon the river steamer *Anson Northup* began to call in at Fort Garry to forge a commercial link between the adjacent Canadian and American Wests. The Dominion forestalled American annexationist aspirations by enticing Manitoba and British Columbia into Confederation, reorganizing the vast expanses in between into the North-west

Grand Rapids before the dam was built in the 1960s. Here the Saskatchewan River dropped 70 feet over four miles in a series of turbulent rapids.



Grand Rapids was a formidable obstacle to the brigades on the Saskatchewan. For the crews of the sturdy but cumbersome York boats the rapids necessitated a laborious portage.

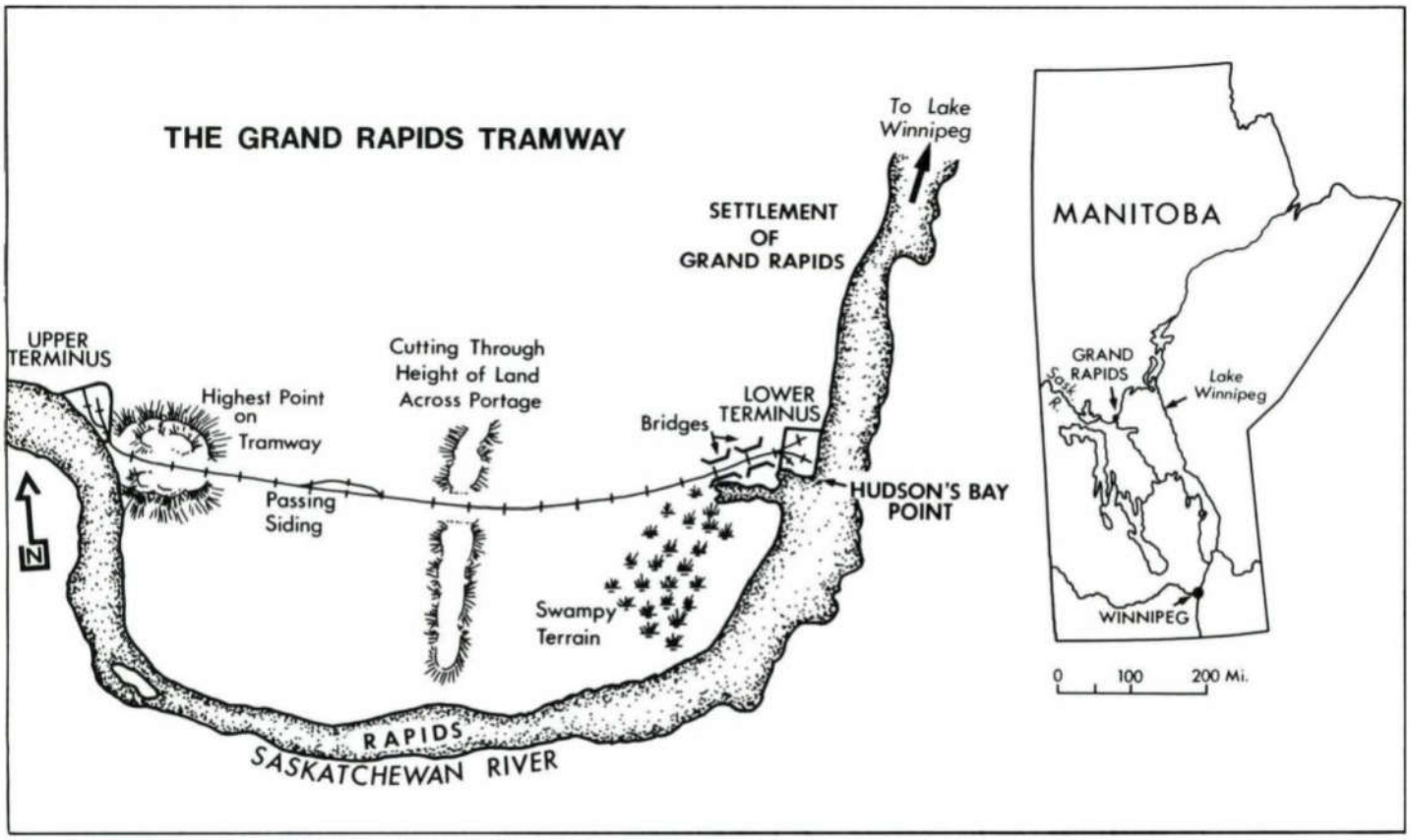


PORTAGING A BOAT.

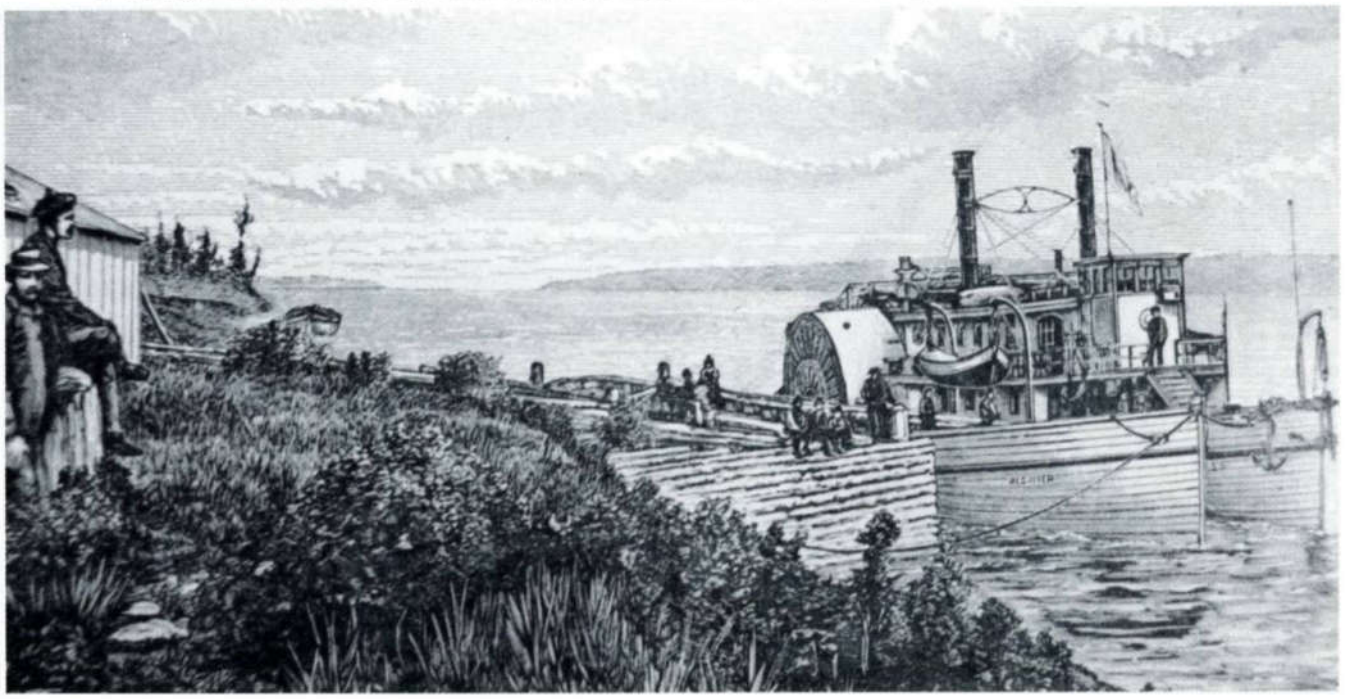
MANITOBA ARCHIVES

Territories. Union with Canada meant the westward march of settlement, which drove the fur-bearing animals before it. Traders were confronted with longer, more expensive voyages; the Indians and mixed bloods who freighted and trapped for them toiled harder to reap a diminishing harvest. An unstable European fur market, dwindling and undependable manpower, and rising costs compelled the Hudson's Bay Company to replace the York boat brigades and cart trains with less labour-intensive transportation means. Reflecting upon the hardships of the 1870 season, J. H. McTavish reckoned that events 'must render it plain . . . that unless a well organized steam service be inaugurated throughout the Country, the transport business of the Company cannot be carried on any longer.'

The advent of the shallow-draught riverboat meant that for an interval each year, the treacherous Saskatchewan could be navigated while its waters were swollen with the icy runoff from distant melting snows. Hence Deputy Surveyor W. S. Gore arrived at Grand Rapids in November 1873 to find 'Carpenters and other Mechanics' hard at work on the Hudson's Bay Company's new stern-wheeler, *Northcote.* Although drawing only two and one-half feet of water with a 200-ton load, the *Northcote* led a precarious



The lake steamer 'Princess' and the barge 'Red River' docked at the lower landing, 1884. With the construction of the tramway vessels could be discharged and loaded in one day instead of up to five days, and cargo transferred at half the previous cost.



MANITOBA ARCHIVES

career on the Saskatchewan. Its numerous strandings and several sinkings sometimes occasioned the need to round up anything that would float to deliver tons of goods that 'had been rendered at great expense at the upper end of the Grand Rapids'. Thus, according to the Company's Chief Commissioner, James Grahame, a decision to build a steel-hulled steamer on the Saskatchewan was 'wisely forced on us'.

When steam was introduced on the Saskatchewan, a dirt road was cut through the wilderness across the Grand Rapids portage; over it cursing teamsters coaxed wagonloads of goods at a cost of one cent per pound. But often up to five days were expended discharging and taking on cargo at Grand Rapids 'as part of it had to be hauled over the Portage after the 'Northcote' got there and the road being very bad the teams could not take full loads.' Bad enough that the *Colvile*, with one-third the cargo capacity of the *Northcote*, required three week-long voyages to and from the Rapids to provide sufficient tonnage for her big sister. Given the capricious nature of the water level, such time-consuming processes could be the crucial determinant of a successful passage or a stranded vessel. In 1873 Surveyor Gore believed a canal could broach the rapids; and in 1877 Commissioner Grahame recommended a canal to avoid the obstacle. Another Company servant, Alexander Matheson, proposed the use of a steam traction engine to pull freight across the portage. He had noted in an article from the *Scientific American* that a six horsepower steam tractor could convey twelve and one-half tons of coal 'no matter what the grade or how deep the mud.' Reasoned Matheson 'Judging from the performance . . . a good road is not necessary . . . and perhaps a small outlay on the portage would put it in a very passible state for it.'

The idea of a railroad across the portage first emerged from Company correspondence during the summer of 1876. An unnamed engineer submitted an initial construction estimate of $13,000 for a tramway made entirely of oak. The price for the wood alone — a resounding $3,285 — prompted Commissioner Grahame to wonder 'whether it would not be better to lay a light iron Rail at once such as the Nanaimo Coal Companies have been exporting to Victoria lately by our ships. It may be better . . . than to carry oak Rails from the Upper Red River to the Grand Rapid which after being laid would be in constant danger of destruction by forest fires'. Donald Smith — then the Company's Land Commissioner — persuaded the Canadian government to grant the lease of a right-of-way in return for an option to purchase the work in the future. By February 1877 the Company had apparently settled upon a tramway and it began to wrestle with logistics.

MANITOBA ARCHIVES

For some twenty years the Grand Rapids tramway was a profitable operation, efficiently conveying freight and passengers across the portage. Its importance waned as the railways expanded into the Northwest.

On 21 May 1877 Commissioner Grahame drew up a contract with Walter Moberly. Moberly promised to construct the three-and-one-half-mile tramway for $16,500 and to have the work completed by 1 October; he immediately placed an order for rails through Norman W. Kittson, a former American fur trader who operated the HBC's steamer *International* which connected at Fort Garry with boats working the lower Red River-Lake Winnipeg route to the Saskatchewan.

Moberly then considered the problem of rolling stock. The Company had tentatively planned that 'Dobbin' should continue to furnish the immediate motive power requirements, but the future acquisition of a small steam locomotive was not altogether ruled out, since Messrs Depew, Howson & Company of St Paul, Minnesota, advised Moberly that 'they could make an Engine suitable for such a Tramway . . . for $1,500.' Regarding cars, the Company originally wanted all-wood construction; then it made a complete about-face to entertain notions of an all-metal car; finally a prudent compromise between weight and durability resulted in a solid-oak tramcar with iron accessories and undercarriage. Depew, Howson & Company estimated that 'platform cars, fitted with brakes &c to carry about 3 to 3½ tons would cost from $200 to $250 each.' But again it was Norman Kittson who enlisted another St Paul firm, C. N. Parker, to put the cars together according to Moberly's specifications for the more reasonable sum of $137 each.

By early summer at Grand Rapids there was considerable activity about the lower landing. In early April, G. S. McTavish was appointed to take charge of the Company's transportation on the Saskatchewan. McTavish arrived that month in the company of Captain John Griggs and two engineers for the *Northcote*; they brought with them two experts sent from England to superintend the assembly of the new, steel-hulled, screw-driven steamer destined to ply the Saskatchewan. The steamer *Colvile* discharged work gangs, construction equipment, and camping gear at Hudson's Bay Point. Moberly had agreed to obtain all his equipment and provisions from the Hudson's Bay Company, which in turn consented to transport everything free of charge and buy it back at a fair discount when the tramway was completed.

Moberly was soon at work locating the right-of-way, while his men, organized into grubbing crews, followed the stakes, clearing back the undergrowth thirty-three feet on either side of the proposed track centre to form a fire-break. Then they toiled as graders, dumping locally quarried stone and dirt to build up a road-bed two to three feet high. Others scoured the forest for spruce and tamarack, from which cross-ties were axe-hewn and flattened on two sides. These were laid down, 2,400 to the mile, and rails

spiked directly to them, no tie plates being used. Where the road-bed passed over treacherous patches of muskeg or forded the two small rivulets flowing across its path, the track was laid over longitudinal sleepers; three such logs were laid parallel, then the cross-ties were put down snugly side by side over top, and the rails spiked down. To provide a smooth pathway for horses, the grade was packed throughout with ballast even with the tops of the ties, and it appears that hand-hewn planks were treenailed between the rails for the horses to tread over the bridges.

The contractor notified Commissioner Grahame in mid-August that the tramway would be finished on schedule, barring inclement weather. Kittson's steamers had delivered the tramcars to Fort Garry for $200; from there they were transhipped to Grand Rapids where Moberly's crew quickly enlisted them to haul rails, ties, and hardware to end of track. '[T]his week I will have the iron laid to the top of the small hill near the upper landing' reported Moberly. 'I graded, laid track and ballasted ¾ of a mile last week — Yesterday I cleared & grubbed all the distance to the upper warehouse except about 3 hours work & today have the grading & track laying going on fast.' G. S. McTavish was an able and determined overseer who had avowed 'as far as lies in my power' to 'push through the transport Service as expeditiously as possible'. With some gratification he reported at the end of August:

> On Wednesday we commenced freighting goods over that portion of the Tramway on which the rails were laid, a distance of nearly 1½ miles. Mr. Moberly and I ran the first two trips, and with one horse and truck we managed to haul two tons weight up the steepest grade on the line. The trucks being new, the axles were not very smooth, so that I am in hopes when everything is favourable, one horse will be able to draw three tons over the Tramway as far as the rails are laid . . .

Writing to London for instructions pertaining to an upcoming goodwill visit by the Governor General Lord Dufferin and his Lady, Commissioner Grahame inquired of the Home office: ' . . . as a demand may be made on us to contribute to his reception I am desirous of knowing to what extent the Company would, considering the present depression in business, be prepared to subscribe'. The Company decided to provide a tour for his lordship up to the Saskatchewan River. When the vice-regal party arrived at Grand Rapids on 11 September about two miles of track was laid, all the ties were cut and the men were clearing the right-of-way at the upper landing. 'Mr. McTavish . . . came to meet us' recorded the Countess of Dufferin 'and took us two miles across the portage on a tramway laid down since July, and the first railway in the Northwest. The car was gorgeously lined with coloured blankets, and when we got out of it we jumped into springcarts, in which we did the unfinished part of the railway . . . and I put in a rivet in the last piece of the railway and was presented with the hammer.'

In October, McTavish 'found that Mr. Moberly had nearly finished the Tramway on the 6th . . . by the 9th the piece of main line leading into the Store House at the Lower end of the portage was completed and after that his men were employed boxing in the drain, cutting wood, working at 'Lily' [the new steel steamer] and laying a piece of track at Upper end in front of Store House.' Continued McTavish:

> . . . The grade at the upper end is steeper than at the cutting a mile and a half from the Lower end, but it could not easily be avoided without blasting, and will answer all purposes for some years to come or until an engine is substituted for horse power.
>
> From the top of the grade at Upper end, one horse drew two cars and four and a quarter tons freight with ease to the Lower end.

It appears that Moberly had been temporarily delayed, but not by the weather: 'None of the Switch Stands &c for the sidings have been sent' complained the contractor 'so I will have to make some. Those iron men have not sent you a fair quality rail — spikes, plates, bolts & nuts good'. In the same report, Moberly suggested that a hand car be added to the fleet of tramcars.

The Grand Rapids tramway was completed on schedule, and Walter Moberly made preparations to turn it over to the Hudson's Bay Company. 'It will relieve us of an immense amount of trouble and anxiety as well as expense in connection with the portage transport, as one horse will now do the work of six under the old system' explained a jubilant Alexander Matheson. Leaving three horses to operate the tramway, all superfluous animals, wagons and harnesses were loaded aboard the *Colvile*. Exclusive of the transportation charges of men, material and supplies, the tramway had cost $17,389.00, but it was worth the sum. Vessels could now be discharged and loaded in one day; cargo could be transferred across the portage for one-half cent per pound — half the previous cost. After the first season's operation, Alexander Matheson concluded 'The Tramway has been a great boon to us, enabling us to do away with most of the men and horses required under the old plan, while transport by it has been so expeditious that the men and horses kept for it are available for numerous other purposes.'

The initial success of the tramway inspired a renewed faith in the old Saskatchewan route; the Hudson's Bay Council of 1878 stipulated that:

> . . . Chief Trader Alexander Matheson be instructed to receive at the Grand Rapids all goods intended for the Northern Districts . . . and have conveyed . . . to Cumberland the goods intended for that District and 600 pieces of those intended for the Athabaska District, sending to Carlton . . . the goods intended for the Districts of Saskatchewan, English River, Edmonton, Peace River and McKenzie River . . .

Little doubt remained that the new tramway was an important key to the successful operation of the Hudson's Bay Company affairs in the Northwest.

The upper landing, showing the cookhouse and on the left, the warehouse. A runaway tramcar once hurtled through the warehouse doors, and into sacks of flour.

Having thus modernized its transportation system, the Company sought to divest itself of the administrative and operational burdens connected with it in order to concentrate on the fur trade which had reached a precarious state. While the tramway was yet under construction, steps were being taken to incorporate a subsidiary, the Winnipeg & Western Transportation Company, to operate 'a Freighting and Transportation business by Steamboats and other vessels upon the [waterways of the Northwest] . . . and the building and operating of Tramways, wharves and warehouses . . . necessary or desirable for the carrying on of said business.' On 13 June 1881 the new company formally took over the Hudson's Bay Company's carrying trade; in return the Hudson's Bay Company received $100,000 of W & WT Co. stock, a fifteen per cent discount on freight rates, and the first priority regarding the shipment of its freight and passengers. The new W & WT Co. received custody of the three steamers *Lily*, *Northcote*, and *Colvile* plus the Grand Rapids tramway, and increased its capitalization to $250,000 accordingly.

For some twenty years the tramway appears to have paid its way handsomely, faithfully conveying freight and passengers across the portage. The operation of the line was smooth, movement over it being co-ordinated, it was said, by a makeshift telephone fabricated from old cans and wire by an enterprising Company servant. Notwithstanding, the experience of Peter Beardy, one of the teamsters, testified that nothing is perfect. The high point on the portage lay about 650 yards from the upper terminus. The Indian and Métis drivers soon hit upon the practice of hauling the cars up from the lake end to the start of the steep grade in the direction of the upper landing. Unhitching the motive power, the drivers would coast the car into the upper terminal, keeping the force of gravity in check by means of the chain brake — the mule being content to trot along behind. The brakes soon began to deteriorate under the punishment; new brake chains were ordered but not quickly supplied. One fateful day, Beardy reached the top of the grade with a loaded tramcar. Tightening the chain brake, he jumped down and, as was the custom, turned the mule loose. Climbing back aboard, he loosened the brake and the car began to roll forward. What followed is described in the reminiscences of an old Indian assistant clerk, who had just sat down to dinner in the house at the upper landing when Beardy began his descent:

> A thundering noise was heard . . .
>
> I dashed out, and here round the bend came a heavily loaded car at a furious speed, a very black French half-breed, with his hair flying in the wind, twisting the brake with all his might; but the chain had broken . . . There was a neat gravel walk from the track right up to our front door, and as poor Beardie came to this and noted the big warehouse doors were shut beyond he gave a wild glance around and noting me jumped from the car and slid right up the gravel walk, his feet hitting the step hard. He was half unconscious with the excitement and shock, and on examination I found his legs and stern full of gravel pellets which, as there was no resident doctor, I extracted with a pocket knife, using a log for an operating table.
>
> The car hit some loose freight on the track and dashed through the doors of the warehouse, which fortunately was piled up with flour at that end and acted as a buffer, and the damage was not extensive. On reporting the matter, new chains were promptly supplied; so there was some good come out of the accident. Mr. Mule had quietly trotted back to his stable at the lower end.

During the Northwest Rebellion, supplies for the troops rolled over the tramway in deference to the strategic importance of the Saskatchewan route. Manitoba's most famous regiment, the 90th Winnipeg Rifles, was accorded special tribute when it passed through Grand Rapids on the way home from Fish Creek and Batoche. 'When we landed' wrote a C Company diarist, Robert K. Allen, 'they had the badge of the 90th on the warehouse door, and underneath the word WELCOME.'

Although the Grand Rapids tramway fulfilled its expectations, there were signs as early as 1888 that all was not well with the overall operation of the Winnipeg & Western Transportation Company. In January the secretary, Herbert Swinford, advised Angus McLean at Grand Rapids to ready the tramway for the coming season; 'but' he cautioned 'do not Exceed $75.00 if you Can Help it.' A few months later Secretary Swinford wrote again:

> I have been thinking that we Could make more Economical arrangements at Grand Rapids in the way of Supplying our men with their meals — in past years we have always sent out a Cook for the men working on the Tramway which item of itself is rather heavy — Now do you think we could arrange with any one there to board them by the week — there will be only four or five . . .

In the summer of 1892, R.W. Ginn of the W & WT Co. informed William Clark, the general manager, that drastic steps would have to be taken to reduce the

cost of handling freight 'to a proper figure'. Apparently the running of the tramway proper was subcontracted to a firm known locally as 'the Lake Co.'; Ginn's remarks devolved into a scathing criticism of that company's gross inefficiency. 'We are practically doing the whole of the tramway work ourselves' remarked the frustrated Mr Ginn. 'We can handle the tramway ourselves' he concluded 'at much less cost and in a manner to prevent the great delay which takes about all the profit away from the Boat.' Scarcely another month had passed before Ginn again was urging that 'we should run the tramway at Grand Rapids ourselves. I can hire two men here with teams, the men to act as firemen [on the steamer *Northwest*] down & back and drive on the tramway, as a large saving can be made both in expense & in delay.'

What circumstances prompted such drastic reorganization schemes? Another missive to the general manager hinted at a partial answer by noting that there 'is no doubt much prejudice against the boats from former day, when it was the policy of the Company to push forward the H.B.Co.'s freight only, and let that of outside parties lie over'. Such an arrangement had been mutually beneficial when the W & WT Co. had monopolized the carrying trade of the Saskatchewan and the Company had been its chief customer. Now, however, there were a growing number of 'outside' users catering to the needs of newly-settled communities, and in addition a powerful newcomer, the railroad, had invaded the more or less exclusive preserve of the Winnipeg and Western Transportation Company.

Railway communication to Prince Albert and Edmonton was opened in 1891 by the Canadian Pacific Railway, compelling the steamship company to withdraw its ships from the trade of the upper Saskatchewan. Thereafter a single boat operated only as far as the Cumberland district. Even then, between 1891 to 1898 the *Northwest* made only nine trips which incurred a total net loss of $3,331.27. Two years later the W & WT Co. closed its books and returned its assets to the Hudson's Bay Company. The tramway at Grand Rapids had been gradually devalued to one-third its initial value by 1894. An inspection in 1901 revealed a dilapidated collection of buildings; much of the warehouse space being no longer essential to house the trickle of freight passing over the tramway. The post itself was now manned by a single 'temporary servant'.

With the extension of the Canadian Northern Railway through Dauphin country to the neighbourhood of the Saskatchewan River and the completion of the road's survey to Prince Albert, the Hudson's Bay Company sensed the inevitable: 'The building of the Railway will have the effect of transforming the Company's business . . . into more of . . . ordinary Saleshop trade than Fur trade.'

At a rapid pace, William Mackenzie and Donald Mann pushed their Canadian Northern on to Winnipegosis; then, from Sifton Junction, northward to The Pas in 1907, and Prince Albert the following year. The Hudson's Bay Company endeavoured to adapt: 'By the new route of the Canadian Northern Railway to Winnipegosis Station and thence through Lake Winnipegosis by Steamer to the Portage at the North end of the Lake, Cedar Lake Post can be reached in 24 hours from Winnipeg, and in two more days Cumberland House can be reached by the Company's steam tug.' While management was convinced that the reaches of the lower Saskatchewan were incapable of 'ever being developed into anything else but a rat-swamp', the Company perceived the golden opportunity to push its retailing industry into the more fertile tracts being opened by the railroad.

Settlement sprang up hard on the heels of the Canadian Northern's survey and construction camps. Native and mixed blood hunters now found it easy to do business at the stores of independent traders which began to dot the railroad line. More disturbing yet was the realization that fishing, lumbering, and mining industries, which sought to exploit the newly-opened wilderness, offered more lucrative employment than the uncertainties of the hunt or riverboat work. The consequences attendant upon railway development were destroying the fur trade as a major revenue source. On the other hand, the iron horse was funnelling an unprecedented horde of immigrants into western Canada; and railway expansion was stimulating investment by British, American, and foreign capitalists in the resources of the Northwest. The era of the great western wheat boom was in full swing. Viewed in this light, the future for the Hudson's Bay Company's retail merchandising trade looked highly promising. In response to potential markets swelling the Winnipegosis and Dauphin areas in particular, the Company debated setting up a major supply base at some station on the Canadian Northern to serve both the settlers and the fur trading posts still lingering on the lower Saskatchewan. A new steamer, *Saskatchewan*, was launched in 1904, but the inauguration of rail communication to The Pas rendered dispensable the operation of this vessel within five years. The old *Northwest* remained on the beach at Cumberland House.

In 1909 too, the ailing trading post at Grand Rapids finally succumbed to the effects of progress. 'The importance of Grand Rapids as a Fur Trading Post has ceased to exist' declared the Company's annual report 'and as there is no prospect of its being made remunerative, its operation is being discontinued.' Thereinafter, the topic of inland transportation in the Saskatchewan District merited scant mention; what little traffic there was remaining between the fur trading posts reverted to the York boat and the

freighter canoe during the summer, and to teams in the winter. The railroad took care of the long haul to the Company's key supply depots.

During the year 1921 the Saskatchewan District witnessed a heavy loss in its fur trade. In an effort to recoup whatever it could, the Canadian Advisory Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company approved a request by the settlers of Grand Rapids to purchase the abandoned tramway 'for the sum of $800 which is considered a fair price as the track is practically scrap.' The Company's land commissioner was further instructed to lease the portions of the tramway on Company property at both ends of the portage for a nominal sum. On 15 December an arrangement was concluded at the behest of Manitoba M.L.A. J. Morrison, to dispose of the tramway to the provincial government for the above sum. Subsequently, the federal authorities reminded the Company of Donald Smith's arrangement, which stipulated that the line was to be turned over to Ottawa if ever it were to be given up. On 4 March 1922, it seems that H. A. Bowman, the Chief Engineer of the Reclamation Branch, advised the Company's chief commissioner, that if the Company and the provincial government recognized that only 'the rails and other material on the property' were involved in the transaction — and presumably not the right-of-way itself, which belonged to the federal government — the deal would stand; otherwise, the Company would have to return the $800. The money was refunded, the lease to the tramway was surrendered to Ottawa, and consequently, the Manitoba government had to negotiate with Ottawa for the tramway, and with the Hudson's Bay Company separately for the property at the terminal points, which was eventually transferred to the local government district of Consul, and still later, to Manitoba Hydro.

For some forty years, Grand Rapids was merely a port of call for the MS. *Keenora;* but undaunted tourists who ventured that far north discovered the memorable thrill of riding the old tramway across the portage and then running the foaming turbulence in a canoe guided by a native paddler. The tramway, however, must have been operated as a tourist attraction on an irregular basis, for as early as 1932 one disappointed party found it unmanned. They had to content themselves with a ramble by foot over the mossy, flower-strewn right-of-way, among rusty rails, and crumbling ties, enveloped as in a corridor by the forest growth looming on either side.

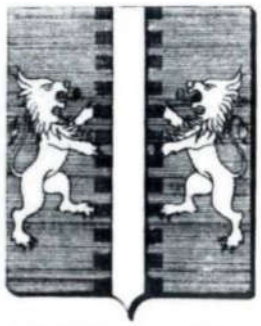
For one last moment in the early 1960s the Grand Rapids tramway became the focus of public attention. Manitoba Hydro began construction of a $140 million hydro-electric project near the mouth of the old Saskatchewan River and a work gang trod a path along the right-of-way one final time to pull up some two-thirds of the tramway which was due to be flooded by a man-made lake. Soon, in response to the controlling floodgates, the water behind the dam started to rise; gradually the present inundated the past. Yet even today a portion of the barren right-of-way is above the water level. The remaining one-third not affected by the dam remains *in situ,* though badly deteriorated and vandalized. One short section was removed and relaid near the museum in Grand Rapids together with the replica of a tramcar built by Manitoba Hydro.

RODGER LETOURNEAU

The greater part of the tramway was inundated in the 1960s as a result of the Grand Rapids hydro-electric project. About one-third remains above water level, although badly deteriorated.

Even though as far back as 1882 there was confidence that the route by the Grand Rapids would be the most economical and direct way of exporting the grain of the North-west to Europe once the projected railway to Hudson Bay was built, the railway was not to be completed for another half-century. The Hudson's Bay Company never modernized the tramway; no donkey steam-engine ever replaced the faithful mules and horses on the portage. As history would have it, before Walter Moberly's gang secured its last rail in place, CPR navvies south of St Boniface were already pushing through the first link in an all-rail transportation system which would render obsolete the Grand Rapids tramway. ◆

The author is senior curator of history at the Natural History Museum in Los Angeles, California.



The Rocheblave coat of arms.

Charlotte de Rocheblave

Métisse Teacher of the Teachers

By Donald Chaput

THE LIFE OF CHARLOTTE DE ROCHEBLAVE, almost unknown to this day, is more than a romantic tale of European nobility in the North American wilderness: it is a story filled with human interest, dedication, and self-sacrifice. Charlotte was a *métisse*, descendant of the Marquis Jean-Joseph Rastel de Rocheblave, captain in the Dauphiné Regiment, who lived near Gap, France.

The marquis evidently instilled the military urge in his family; at least four of his twenty children became officers in the New World. Two of the Rastels were officers of the marine in Louisiana in the 1750s, and two others served in Canada. One of these, Philippe-François, became progenitor of the Canadian family.

Philippe-François served on the Pennsylvania and Illinois frontiers in the late 1750s. On 11 April 1763, he married Marie-Michelle Dufresne at Kaskaskia, Illinois. Her father was an officer in the local militia.

The career of Philippe-François, or Rocheblave as he was called, is well known. He joined the Spanish service and was commandant at the post of Sainte-Geneviève on the Mississippi River. He later shifted his allegiance to the British, and during the American Revolution was the leading British official in Illinois. He was captured by George Rogers Clark, sent to Virginia, escaped, and found his way to Canada. In 1793 he was elected to the Assembly of Lower Canada and served until his death in 1802. His home was at Varennes, near Montreal.

Of his six children, three were boys. It was the third son, Noel, who was father of Charlotte. He was born at Kaskaskia and early entered the fur trade at Mackinac. Noel Rocheblave was at that post as early as 1786. In the 1790s he entered into a partnership with Jacques Porlier, and the firm of Rocheblave & Porlier with headquarters at Mackinac was one of the largest in the Upper Lakes area.

Manitoulin Island, Georgian Bay, was in the Rocheblave-Porlier sphere. Noel must have gone there periodically, and while there met and lived with Nigans, a woman of the Ottawa tribe. A daughter, Charlotte, was born to Noel and Nigans sometime in 1800. Noel and Nigans were most likely not married; if any record of such a marriage did exist, it has been lost. On 14 July 1804, young Charlotte was baptized at Mackinac.

By this time Noel had decided to move east, as in 1804 he had been elected as the representative from Surrey in the Assembly. Late in 1805, while on a trip from Detroit to Philadelphia, Noel was injured in a boating accident on Lake Champlain; he was taken to Montreal, where he died on 10 December.

Apparently Noel spent much time with daughter Charlotte before his death, for she demonstrated in the coming years great facility in written and spoken French. In the autumn of 1813, Nigans and Charlotte left Manitoulin Island and settled permanently in Oka, the French-Indian post at Lake of Two Mountains near Montreal. In addition to French, Charlotte knew English, Algonquin, Ojibwa, Ottawa, and Nipissing; these latter four were all closely related dialects of the widespread Algonquian peoples.

Upon arriving at Lake of Two Mountains Nigans, with daughter Charlotte acting as interpreter, requested of the Sulpician missionaries that they be instructed in the Catholic faith and be permitted to live there. They were accepted into the settlement, and

Nigans was soon baptized. The missionaries were confused about Charlotte's origins; they did not baptize her, assuming that an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company had done so earlier.

For a few years, Charlotte was sent to the convent school with the sisters at Pointe-Claire. She then returned to Lake of Two Mountains and for some time considered joining the Sisters of the Congregation. Yet, two conditions prevented her from doing so: she did not wish to abandon her mother, and she also felt because of her language ability that she could be of use to the missionaries. In the coming years she had several marriage proposals, but these, too, were turned aside so that she could carry out her double task.

The village at Lake of Two Mountains dates from the 1670s. In 1704 the Catholic Iroquois (Mohawks) settled there among the Algonquins, where they were soon joined by a band of Nipissings, also an Algonquian group. For the next 150 years, there were usually two missionaries at Oka to serve these Indians, one for each language group. From 1716 on, the mission was operated by the Sulpicians, who had received the land as a seigneury.

By the time Charlotte de Rocheblave moved to Oka (the name of the village at Lake of Two Mountains), the post had lost its significance as a fur-trade centre. Nevertheless the Hudson's Bay Company kept a small staff there for a few decades. Oka was the post nearest Montreal, which gave it some prestige value. Also, this location gave the traders some contact with and control of the Iroquois. When John McLean joined the Company staff there in 1821, he reported that the village of Oka was divided into two parts, with the Catholic church in the centre. There was little contact between the Mohawks (Iroquois) and the various Algonquian groups (Nipissings, Ottawas, Algonquin, and Abnakis).

The HBC storehouse built at Lake of Two Mountains between 1820 and 1823. The 'unproductive' post was closed by the Company in 1848; the building (above as it was in 1965) was used as a summer residence for a congregation of nuns.

C.C.J. BOND

Philippe-François Rastel de Rocheblave, grandfather of Charlotte, was the leading British official in Illinois during the American revolution.

Charlotte de Rocheblave became very active in parish work, teaching the youngsters, helping the priests, and participating in church affairs. Parish records for the nineteenth century are extensive and show that over the years Charlotte was a witness or godparent at eighteen Oka ceremonies. In the early years (1820s, 1830s), she was one of the few literate witnesses who signed the registers.

Her function at these ceremonies is an example of the cleavage at Oka caused by the Algonquian and Iroquoian dialects, which had nothing in common. In all of the ceremonies in which Charlotte participated, none included the Iroquois. For example, she witnessed an Ottawa marriage in 1821, a Nipissing baptism in 1823, an Algonquin baptism in 1836, an Abnaki marriage in 1841, and an Ottawa baptism in 1842.

From approximately 1820 through the 1860s Charlotte was the most talented, literate person at Oka. She was familiar with French, English, and the various Algonquian dialects. Oka was not just a mission. In the Catholic plans for the spread of missions from Ungava to Hudson Bay to the Red River country, Oka was to be the ideal training centre for priests. The mission was close to Montreal, which made it convenient for the priests. Yet the Indians at Oka, especially the Algonquian groups, spoke dialects that were very similar to those of the distant Cree, Ojibwa, and Montagnais.

Although these dialects were similar, there had to be on hand an intelligent native speaker who knew the many linguistic nuances, and who was also an accomplished reader, speaker, and writer of French. The priests in training wished to speak the dialects and also to learn how to write textbooks, hymnals, and other religious works. The ideal teacher was living in Oka, young Charlotte de Rocheblave.

Father Charles-Louis-François de Bellefeuille was at Oka in the 1820s. Before he left, Bellefeuille wrote one of the most treasured manuscripts in the Nipissing dialect, ninety-one pages of sermons. This was one of Charlotte's earliest linguistic tasks.

Father Flavien Durocher joined the mission at Oka in 1830 and stayed for fourteen years. Working closely with Charlotte, he became proficient in several Algonquian dialects. According to a major publication on linguistics, 'when he left he was master of the language'. From 1844 to 1853 he served at the Montagnais mission at Saguenay. Before his death in 1876, he wrote catechisms, prayer-books, and hymnals, in Algonquin and Montagnais.

In the 1840s, Father Pierre Richard spent a few years at Oka under Charlotte's tutelage. He was to publish *Way of the Cross* and several dozen pamphlets, all in the Nipissing dialect.

Perhaps the most famous religious linguist of the century among the Catholic priests was Father Jean-André Cuoq, born in France in 1821. In 1847 he was assigned to Oka as missionary to the Nipissings. For the next ten years he preached and studied and became a master of several Algonquian dialects, with much help from Charlotte. Father Cuoq was further challenged in 1857 when Father Nicolas Dufresne, who had charge of the Oka Mohawks, left the mission.

Cuoq applied himself to the study of this Iroquoian dialect. He soon preached and wrote in Mohawk. He thus became the first individual among the leaders at Oka to bridge the gap completely between the Algonquins and the Iroquois. Before his death, Father Cuoq wrote dozens of works in both languages. In addition to hymnals, catechisms, and other religious works, he also wrote grammars and dictionaries which were highly praised by language scholars.

An example of the far-flung influence of the Oka mission, and of Charlotte's work, can be seen in the career of Father Georges-Antoine Belcourt. He was born at Baie du Febvre, Quebec, in 1803, and was ordained in 1827. He wished to go to the Red River mission and was accepted by Father J.-N. Provencher. To prepare him for the work, Belcourt was sent to Oka early in 1830 to study Algonquin, which was similar to the Cree and Ojibwa of the Red River country. In April of 1831, Belcourt left Oka with Father Provencher, bound for Saint-Boniface. In the next

'Indian Village and Catholic Mission, Lake of Two Mountains.' Brown wash over pencil drawing done by George Heriot 1 October 1807, six years before Charlotte and her mother settled at Lake of Two Mountains permanently.

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

twenty years, Belcourt published several key works in the Cree and Ojibwa dialects.

In the operation of the Oka mission, and in the training of priests for mission work, there was a major role for Charlotte de Rocheblave, but no glory. In the nineteenth century it would have been unusual to acknowledge the significance of a female. Furthermore, she was a *métisse* — more reason to keep her in the background.

The priests who preached and trained at Oka became Canada's foremost Algonquian linguists, publishing scores of books and pamphlets on linguistic and religious subjects. Yet, in the publications, and in any account of the careers of the priests, the name of Charlotte de Rocheblave will not be found. For example, Belcourt's biographer states that at Oka 'M. Belcourt eut pour professeur Mm. de Bellefeuille et Durocher.' Durocher, of course, arrived at Oka at the same time as Belcourt, and at this period had very little knowledge of the dialects. It would have been more accurate to state that Charlotte was teaching Belcourt's teachers.

Although Charlotte received no publicity in the many books and pamphlets in or based on the Algonquian dialects, Father Cuoq, in a manuscript history of Oka, praised the devout Nigans and her talented daughter Charlotte. Cuoq, probably the century's outstanding Algonquianist, wrote: 'Charlotte, who knew French well and had a great talent for interpreting, became the teacher of all the missionaries at the Lake.' Cuoq also mentioned the many translations she performed, and the many religious songs she adapted into the dialects.

Charlotte's role, and her historical neglect, were similar to the Red River careers of the sisters Angélique and Marguerite Nolin, also *métisse*. In 1829 the Nolin sisters opened the first school for girls in western Canada, at Saint-Boniface, with the support of Bishop Provencher. From 1834 to 1844, Angélique Nolin worked at the Ojibwa mission at Baie St-Paul. In addition to teaching, she worked at a task that reinforced what Charlotte de Rocheblave began in 1830: Angélique helped Father Belcourt prepare an Ojibwa dictionary and textbooks (see *The Beaver*, Winter 1975).

Charlotte's life was full, but hard. Her mother, Nigans, died in 1862. In Charlotte's later years her eyes became a problem, for she developed cataracts. The Montreal surgeons could do nothing for her and she eventually became blind. Charlotte died at Oka on 7 April 1873. According to Father Cuoq, 'this venerable blinded teacher did not cease until her death to give an admirable example of conformity to the will of God'. Although we can only conjecture, it seems probable that her eye problems were related to the many decades of daylight and evening hours spent with various missionaries as they struggled with Ojibwa verbs or Algonquian songs.

MANITOBA ARCHIVES

The Reverend Georges-Antoine Belcourt who studied Algonquin at the Oka mission where Charlotte, fluent in French and Algonquian dialects, 'became the teacher of all the missionaries'.

One wonders if over the years the 'legitimate' members of the Rastel de Rocheblave family had any contact with Charlotte. Her uncle Pierre and family lived in nearby Montreal, and there were Rocheblaves in Quebec province throughout the century. However, the family was of the elite, and held high positions in government and business. No doubt the *métisse* at nearby Oka, going blind from years of study and teaching, was a reminder of Noel's indiscretion in the wilderness, and not a cause for family pride.

The sons of the Marquis de Rocheblave had adjusted well to the New World. They were outstanding soldiers for New France, and after the conquest became influential legislators and merchants under the British regime. One son, Pierre-Louis, decided to stay in French service and became governor of Ile de Gorée in Africa. The next generation of the Rocheblaves in the New World continued to be influential in politics and trade.

Somehow, Noel de Rocheblave, though he had only five years with Charlotte before his early death in 1805, was able to instill in her a sense of service and dedication. With this attitude, and her early grounding in spoken and written French, she was to become the most influential teacher for the many distant Algonquian posts. Surely such a life deserves a place in the notices of the many other contributions of the Rastel de Rocheblave family. ◆

NORTHERN BOOKS

JEWISH LIFE IN CANADA
Paintings and Commentaries by William Kurelek; A Historical Essay by Abraham Arnold

Hurtig Publishers, Edmonton, 1976. 91 pp. $9.95.

Reviewed by Miriam Waddington

So far we have not had a history of Jewish settlement in Canada by a professional historian. There have been countless scattered articles, statistical accounts, name lists and annual reports. A few of the latter were written by sociologists and historians, but most of them were the work of loving amateurs writing out of a parochial spirit and a deep underlying anxiety about the continuing existence of Jews in Canada or anywhere else. Understandably, their feelings often led to attempts to rationalize the Jewish presence by unduly emphasizing the valuable contribution of Jews to Canadian society at the expense of documenting the realities.

This book, the result of a collaboration between a prairie painter, William Kurelek, and a prairie historian, Abraham Arnold, comes as a welcome change. It does not attempt to justify or reaffirm the value of the Jewish presence in Canada, but simply to trace and interpret it. Arnold's seven essays which make up the second part of the book — on Jewish immigration, economic life, politics, religion, education, and community organization — will go a long way towards filling the gap in most readers' knowledge about Canadian Jews, their origins and customs. Until now readers have had to rely mostly on the fictional accounts of novelists such as Kreisel, Richler and Wiseman, each of whom depicts the Jews of Canada according to his or her individual experience and vision. Or else they have based their notions of Jewishness on the personalities of poets like Irving Layton and Leonard Cohen, or even on the stereotypes so often encountered in the movies and newspapers.

And in fact, it was partly the desire to combat the influence of stereotypes of the Jew still so often negative, as Kurelek points out in his introduction (and as Arnold documents with quotations from the writings of Sir John A. Macdonald, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Mackenzie King), that first impelled Kurelek to paint and annotate the sixteen paintings that comprise the first half of the book. His motives were of course more complicated: Kurelek is a religious Catholic of Ukrainian background and he envisions this book as a votive offering to his own religion as well as an expression of gratitude to Av Isaacs of Toronto, the art gallery owner who helped him launch his career as a painter. The impulse to create a gift, both for his God and his friends, is a generous one and fully characteristic of the way the creative urge expresses itself.

As votive offerings the paintings are full of charm and humility. They abound in naive and careful detail, and as we might expect, are pastoral and emblematic. The tradition of religious painting is largely medieval, so the underlying feeling in Kurelek's work is the unification of past and present. The present looms larger than life in Kurelek's depiction of barns, grain elevators and prairie skies. With a touch of his brush he vivifies objects so that they become almost human. It is clear that his own experience shaped the western context, whereas he has had to rely on archival materials and photographs for the details of life in Toronto, Montreal and Halifax. By far the most powerful paintings are 'Jewish immigrants arriving on the prairie', 'Pioneering at Edenbridge', and the iconographic 'Bender Hamlet'.

The notes that accompany each painting are personal and impressionistic, but the inner life that animates them is in no way Jewish. Instead, they are poetically Christian, and so the figures look more like Ukrainian farmers than Jewish city dwellers. This tension, or difference, whether conscious or not, adds a further dimension of interesting strangeness to the work.

Arnold's essays form an analytic counterpoint to Kurelek's lyrical paintings. It was a highly unconventional editorial decision to yoke together the personal reminiscences of a painter with the research writing of an historian. Each really deserves a book of his own. As it is, they add up to a rich and concentrated experience, and one is grateful for both as one moves from Kurelek's visionariness to Arnold's factuality.

Arnold's essays on Jewish immigration, Jewish economic life, and Jewish education, cover the wide range and variety of Jewish life in Canada from the beginning to the present. Here, for the first time, the reader can find an account of the difference between Jewish secular and religious education, and can understand the role played by Yiddish language and culture in early settlements. The Jewish agricultural settlements in the West with their utopian aims are especially noteworthy, as is Arnold's history of the Winnipeg Jewish community which is unique, not only in Canada, but in all of North America.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FIRST 200 YEARS OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

We have had many requests for the out-of-print Autumn 1970 Beaver. This issue contains a lively and scholarly summary of the highlights of the Company's first 200 years by Professor Glyndwr Williams.

In response to these requests the issue has been reprinted.

Seventy pages of text and pictures.

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Perhaps there are also unintentional clues in this historical account of a single ethnic community that have to do with the more general factors in *any* community which help to produce creative and innovative people. For it is no secret that Winnipeg was the birthplace of many of our most notable painters, writers, and politicians — Jews and non-Jews alike.

Finally, with this book Kurelek and Arnold have created a valuable addition to Canadian social history which ought to be used for reference, read for information, and looked at with pleasure.

Professor Miriam Waddington, poet and literary critic, is a member of the English department at York University, Toronto.

WE DON'T LIVE IN SNOW HOUSES NOW
Reflections of Arctic Bay

Edited by Susan Cowan. Canadian Arctic Producers Limited, Ottawa, 1976. 194 pp., illus. $11.95

Reviewed by P. A. C. Nichols

This book is a collection of interviews with a number of Eskimo residents at Arctic Bay on northern Baffin Island, N.W.T. The statements were tape-recorded in Eskimo and later translated into English. In the book are the edited English text and the Eskimo syllabic version of the interviews. It is illustrated with photographs of the Eskimo participants and with other excellent old and new photographs of life as it was, and now is, at Arctic Bay.

While the interviews were done at Arctic Bay, similar statements could have been obtained at any settlement in the Arctic where the Eskimo have experienced the same change in life-style, albeit earlier or later than at Arctic Bay.

Rhoda Innuksuk and Susan Cowan have done a commendable job in their efforts to give a true and literal translation of what was actually recorded in Eskimo. To translate Eskimo into English is not an easy matter if one wishes to convey the exact meaning as expressed by the author.

The book is produced by Canadian Arctic Producers Limited, the organization charged with the responsibility of promoting, collecting, and retailing Eskimo art.

Most of the statements in the book deal, in part or entirely, with the history and development of carving and other forms of Eskimo art. One is apt to get the impression that this aspect of Eskimo life and work is, and was, far more important than it is, or was, in actual fact. Although Eskimo carving in walrus ivory and soapstone was widespread, and the tools and equipment used in the creative process have been traced to the earliest known residents of the Arctic, it is only within recent times that so much emphasis has been placed on Eskimo art, and primarily for monetary gain.

To this reader, the most interesting and poignant parts of the statements are those dealing with the old and now bygone life of the Eskimo, particularly those recorded by the older people. In every one of these recordings, there is noted a deep nostalgic regret for the passing of the old ways. Even among the younger Eskimo who can barely remember what it was like to live off the land, there is still a feeling that something worth while has been lost. In the old ways, life was indeed precarious, and the lines between feast, famine and starvation were extremely narrow; but there was an indomitable spirit which nothing introduced by the trader, missionary, and government can replace.

The interviews bring out very clearly what the Eskimo feel about their changing life-style. The advantages of never being hungry, inadequately clothed, or poorly housed, are accepted as a right and with little gratitude to a benevolent and welfare-oriented government. There is even criticism of a society which is slow in providing, or fails to provide at all, other amenities now considered essential to their well-being.

It is unfortunate that this book will not have wide circulation, for it gives in the words of those directly involved, a graphic picture of what happens when, in a scant few years, a primitive society is crash-landed into a highly developed one. The physical advantages are obvious, but at what great cost in pride of self-sufficiency to a people whose very name 'Inuit' means a 'people pre-eminent'.

Mr Nichols' long association with Arctic Canada began as an HBC apprentice-clerk in 1933. During his years on Baffin Island and in Arctic Quebec, he learned to speak Eskimo and to use the skills of the Eskimo's traditional way of life. He retired in 1974.

THE EXPLORATION OF NORTHERN CANADA
500 to 1920 — A Chronology

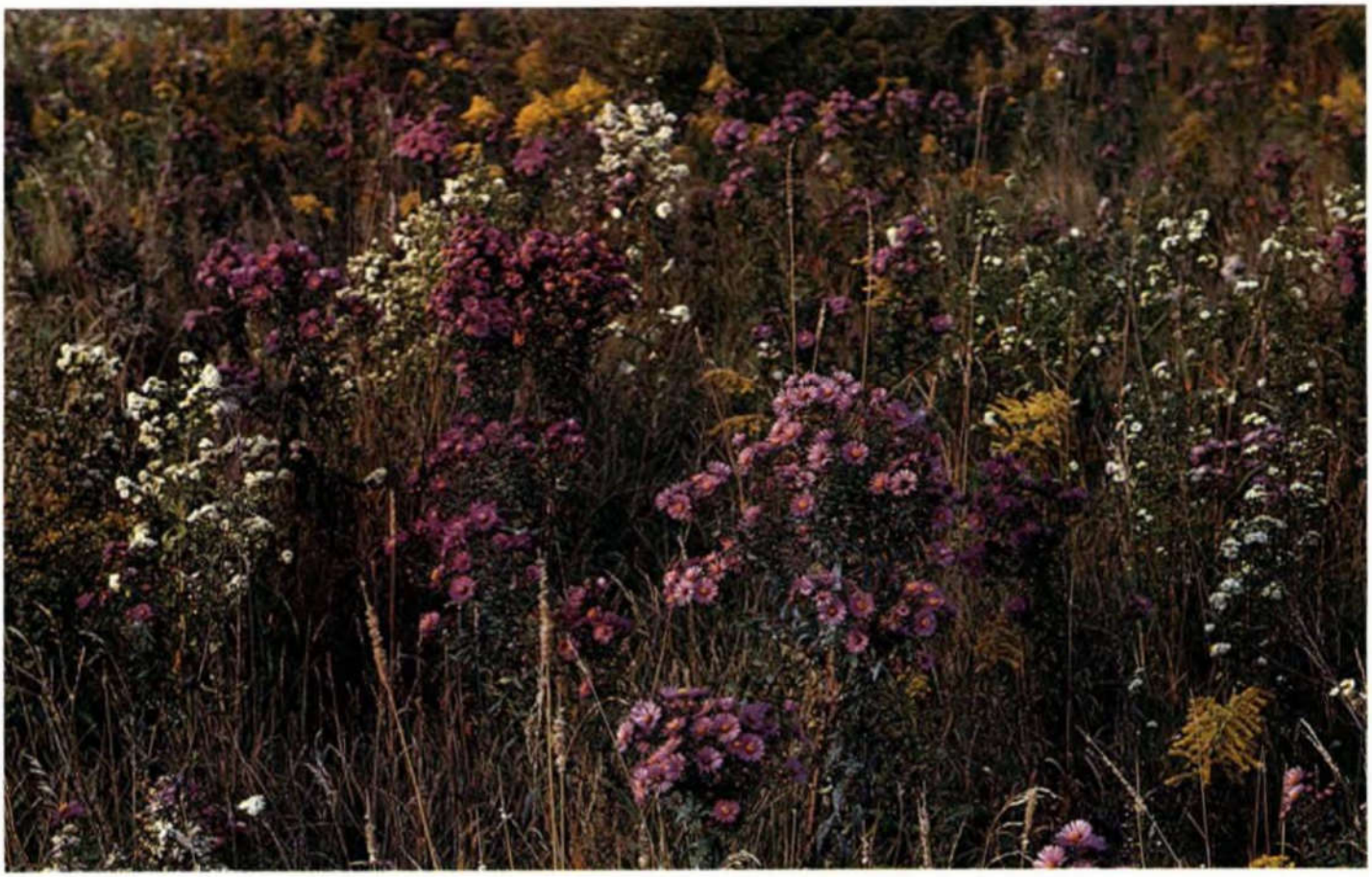
By Alan Cooke and Clive Holland. Arctic History Press, Toronto, 1977. 544 pp., map. $50.00. ($60.00 after 1 January 1978)

Reviewed by Alex Stevenson

As we look at the map of our northern regions, names of various ethnic origins and backgrounds remind us of the broad heritage that has built Canada. This impressive and definitive volume on the history of the exploration of northern Canada is a record of the participants, and the related events of the past 1,400 years. The roll call includes all the great explorers to our northern shores and many others whom the authors, by careful and meticulous research, have revealed for the first time. The record begins in 500 A.D. with the Irish voyages of St Brendan, goes on to the Vinland voyages, and continues to list explorers and expeditions of all kinds: mariners in search of the Northwest Passage, whalers, and fur traders. The documentation ends with 1920 — a date chosen because of the introduction of aircraft to northern Canada about that time.

The 544-page volume which might be considered as an historical dictionary of the Canadian North is divided into three sections. The chronology comprises thousands of entries recording the expeditions and events of northern exploration. Each entry has been keyed to part two, the bibliography, which extends to over 160 pages and includes the primary and manuscript sources of Cambridge University's Scott Polar Research Institute. The third section, an index of names, is 171 pages long and lists in alphabetical order more than 4,000 men and women known to have participated in the exploration of the North. The entries are cross-referenced to the chronology and the bibliography.

The co-authors of this meticulous work with its wealth of carefully researched and documented information are both associated with Cambridge University's Scott Polar Research Institute. Alan Cooke is the former assistant librarian and curator of manuscripts and



'Purple Asters' from 'Canadian Wildflowers'. Photograph by Mary Ferguson.

the former editor of its journal *The Polar Record*. Clive Holland is presently the assistant librarian and curator of the manuscripts and curator of the Institute's museum. Both have published numerous articles on northern history and related subjects.

Alan Cooke writes in his introduction:

> In 1968 Clive Holland and I began work on this chronological list with the support of the History Division of the National Museum of Man, part of the National Museums of Canada, Ottawa. By 1970, the list had advanced far enough for us to begin publishing parts of it in Polar Record, the journal of the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, where both Holland and I were then working . . . A chronological arrangement of information with a supporting bibliography provides an efficient means of access to a field of literature, a means more efficient in some ways than the topical and regional bibliographies with which everyone is familiar. Unlike these bibliographies, a chronological list, such as this one, can also be read for its own interest.

The book is illustrated by a 26-page atlas of Canada, north of latitude 55°, together with a 24" x 28" full-colour map of Canada to put the Atlas section into its broader geographic context.

Published by the Arctic History Press, a subsidiary of McClelland & Stewart Ltd., *The Exploration of Northern Canada* is ruggedly bound in padded leatherette. It is a valuable reference and research aid, and will appeal primarily to collectors and historians, but it should also be of interest to all who wish to gain a better understanding and feeling for the events that have contributed to Canada's rich heritage.

Alex Stevenson has written many articles on Arctic Canada, from first-hand association with its people since 1934, and from his study of polar literature. He is chairman of the NWT Heritage Council.

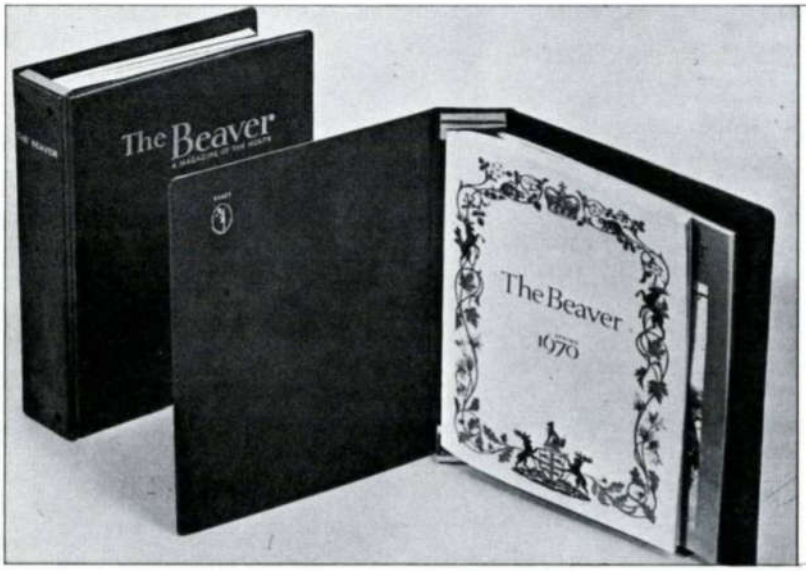
CANADIAN WILDFLOWERS

By Mary Ferguson and Richard M. Saunders. Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd., Toronto, 1976. 192 pp., illus. $19.95

Reviewed by Karen L. Johnson

This book is a visual delight, with some of the finest colour printing of flower photographs that I have ever seen, as well as an artistic and informative layout. It contains nearly 160 photographs of common Canadian wildflowers, ones that you are likely to see while walking in your favourite nature area. The majority of the shots were taken by Mary Ferguson, an experienced professional nature photographer, but some fifteen other people also contributed to the book, allowing the selection of the best in a series of photographs for each plant. Richard M. Saunders, who did the text for the book, is a retired professor of history with a strong background as a naturalist and nature photographer. The combination has produced an excellent book with a clear, brief text and superb colour photographs.

The book is laid out in four major sections, each dealing with a typical plant habitat: marshes, bogs and other wet places; the Arctic-Alpine area; fields, meadows and other open places; and woodlands. Each section has a general introduction with a landscape photograph followed by the individual wildflowers



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found in the habitat. Each photo occupies nearly two-thirds of the page with the text for the plant on the remainder of the page. This is far more convenient for the reader than the common practice of placing photo and text on opposite pages or, even worse, separating them by one or more pages.

Most of the photographs are relatively close shots of the plant and clearly show the intricate details of the flower. They are, in fact, so detailed and the colour so true to life, that our Museum mini-diorama and plant model artist uses the book as a standard reference in her work. The brief text gives the common name(s), scientific name and family of each plant in the heading. It then describes the origin of the name of the plant and gives other characteristics such as its blooming dates and geographic distribution. The text is poetic in its description of the flowers and their habitats and includes interesting tidbits of information on the history, folklore, and uses of each plant.

Although the book is not designed as a field guide, its arrangement allows one to leaf quickly through a relatively small number of photos when trying to identify a plant. Many plants could not, of course, be included because of space limitations, but those included are either the most common or the most beautiful and striking plants likely to be encountered in each area. The book is therefore useful as a general reference and is not so large as to be awkward in handling. It contains an index of both the common and scientific names of the plants covered, and is well-bound and sturdy; altogether an excellent publication. I would highly recommend it to anyone interested in either the natural history of Canada or in beautiful books.

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HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY CATALOGUE
Autumn and Winter 1910-1911

Watson and Dwyer Publishing Ltd., Winnipeg, 1977. 256 pp. $8.95

Reviewed by Chester Duncan

The mail-order business of the great department stores appears to be waning (the Hudson's Bay mail order was discontinued in 1913), but there are still plenty of ways to compare the past's presentation of its wares with our own. This handsome reproduction of a rare catalogue of 67 years ago is, among other things, lots of fun, but it is likely to teach the reader more about those dear dead days than a formal history or sociology text.

And although I guess we have made progress — if you believe in progress — it often seems that we would prefer to be back there where nothing looks threatening (though the War was waiting) and where the advertising is designed mainly to serve rather than possess the buyer. There is nothing in our present way of life on this continent that is more blatant and degrading than some advertising. It enters our homes without so much as a 'please' or 'sorry', and a lot of the time it simply spoils everything.

So it is comforting and settling to think of the clear, star-filled autumn evening when this catalogue was quietly laid on the front porch while the aching sounds of distant piano-practice were soon to be interrupted by an exciting thumbing-through. And now that pleasure is increased by nostalgia and sighing comparisons.

The first and most obvious comparison is that of prices. One cannot make too much of this, of course, because we are finally getting used to the idea that we have such a different set of values that the fantasy-game of dreaming what you could do in 1910 with a 1977 salary isn't much fun anymore. Nevertheless, it is pleasant and sad to think of three dollars as a substantial amount of money ($2.50 would buy you an excellent fedora), and to consider the many ladies to whom a gorgeous full-furred black Astrachan coat would be prohibitive at $46.50.

This coat is very long. In fact everything is long except the faces, though often the faces do seem dis-

proportionately small as compared with our own, surrounded as they are — especially in fall and winter of course — by swathing safeguards against cold and presumption. I suppose that we have a clearer idea today as to what the female body looks like, but in a way that's no big deal when we consider the loss to romance in the gain of sexuality. These tubular ladies, despite some of the grotesqueries of hat and muff, retain enough charm in their mystery to be subtly attractive to those not besotted by permissiveness — and perhaps, shortly, also to the besotted.

When we come to the area of night-gown and underclothing the same principle prevails: no one is trying to bypass the modesty that intensifies romance. The corset division, it is true, seems almost to deny nature in the interests of hourglass fashion. It is interesting to note that an offering marked *special* (B852) is the brassiere. 'This garment takes the place of a tight-fitting corset cover. Is particularly adapted to ladies with large busts.' The drawing of it looks like a cradle.

'Why wear Woollen Underwear? Because it prevents colds, chills, rheumatism, etc. . . . No sudden change in temperature is so great that Pure Wool (sample enclosed) will not successfully meet.' In both their inner and outer clothing the men of 1910 are sturdy, confident, substantial. Much more leeway than in our day is given to the particular sartorial opportunities of male childhood. In the accompanying descriptive script (sure of itself but never oppressive) the word *pretty* is constantly used to present clothing for boys from five to ten. One is glad to see long hair contributing to the attractiveness of the male children, but the costumes, I suspect (sailor suits and Galatea suits,) would be greeted with quite unjust derision today. Looking at one of them I remember now that somewhere there is a darling photograph of me at the age of five in a white drill Russian military blouse suit, good enough to eat. Many readers will, I know, taste the same bitter-sweet recollection.

There are over 250 pages in the catalogue, and on almost every page one meets something so apparently exotic that one is tempted to say that in 1910 somebody made it up. But there we are in a version embodied by our grandparents. To browse for hidden signs of kinship is a fascinating experience, but to leaf through for no purpose at all is still wonderfully worth it. It will redeem in most unusual fashion the loneliest winter's night of the year.

Musician and composer Chester Duncan is with the department of English, University of Manitoba.

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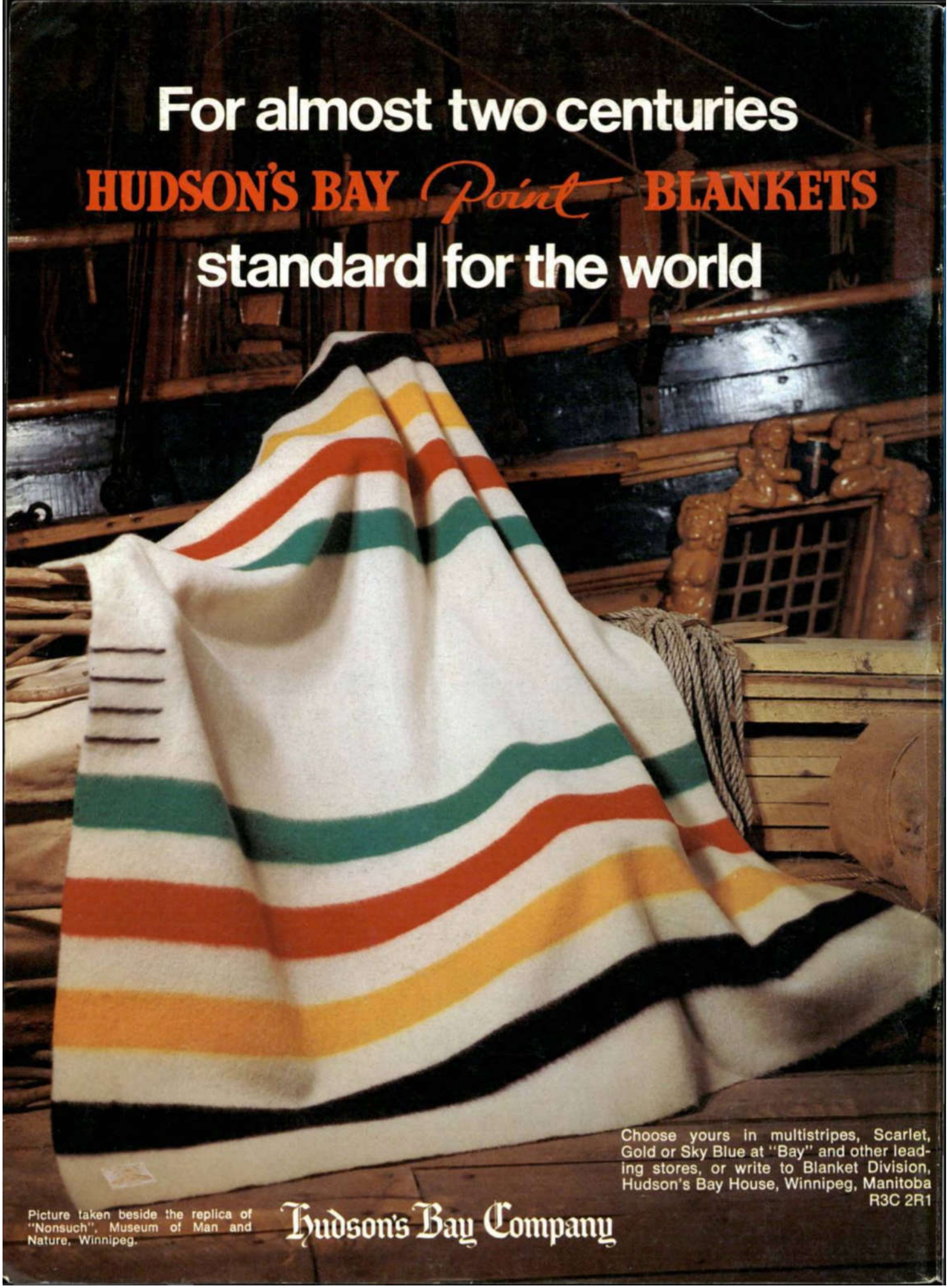
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Picture taken beside the replica of "Nonsuch", Museum of Man and Nature, Winnipeg.
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